



# The Regimental Bulletin

*Phil Kearny Civil War Round Table of Northern New Jersey*

Visit our website to register for all our monthly meeting presentations and updates  
[www.PhilKearnyCWRT.org](http://www.PhilKearnyCWRT.org)

\*\*\* NEXT MEETING \*\*\*

Wed, June 19th @ - 7PM - Online Zoom Presentation

## **The Battle of Mill Springs, Kentucky, January 19, 1862 with Stuart W. Sanders**

On January 19, 1862, Confederate and Union forces clashed in the now-forgotten Battle of Mill Springs. Armies of inexperienced soldiers chaotically fought in the wooded terrain of south-central Kentucky as rain turned bloodied ground to mud. Mill Springs was the first major Union victory since the Federal disaster of Bull Run. This Union triumph, the first major US victory in the West, secured the Bluegrass State in Union hands, opening the large expanses of Tennessee for Federal invasion. From General Felix Zollicoffer meeting his death by wandering into Union lines to the heroics of General George Thomas, Civil War historian Stuart Sanders chronicles this important battle and its essential role in the war.



**Stuart W. Sanders**

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**Stuart W. Sanders** is the Director of Research and Publications at the Kentucky Historical Society, where he oversees the agency's library, the Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, the historical markers program, the America250KY Commission, and the Civil War Governors of Kentucky Digital Documentary Edition.

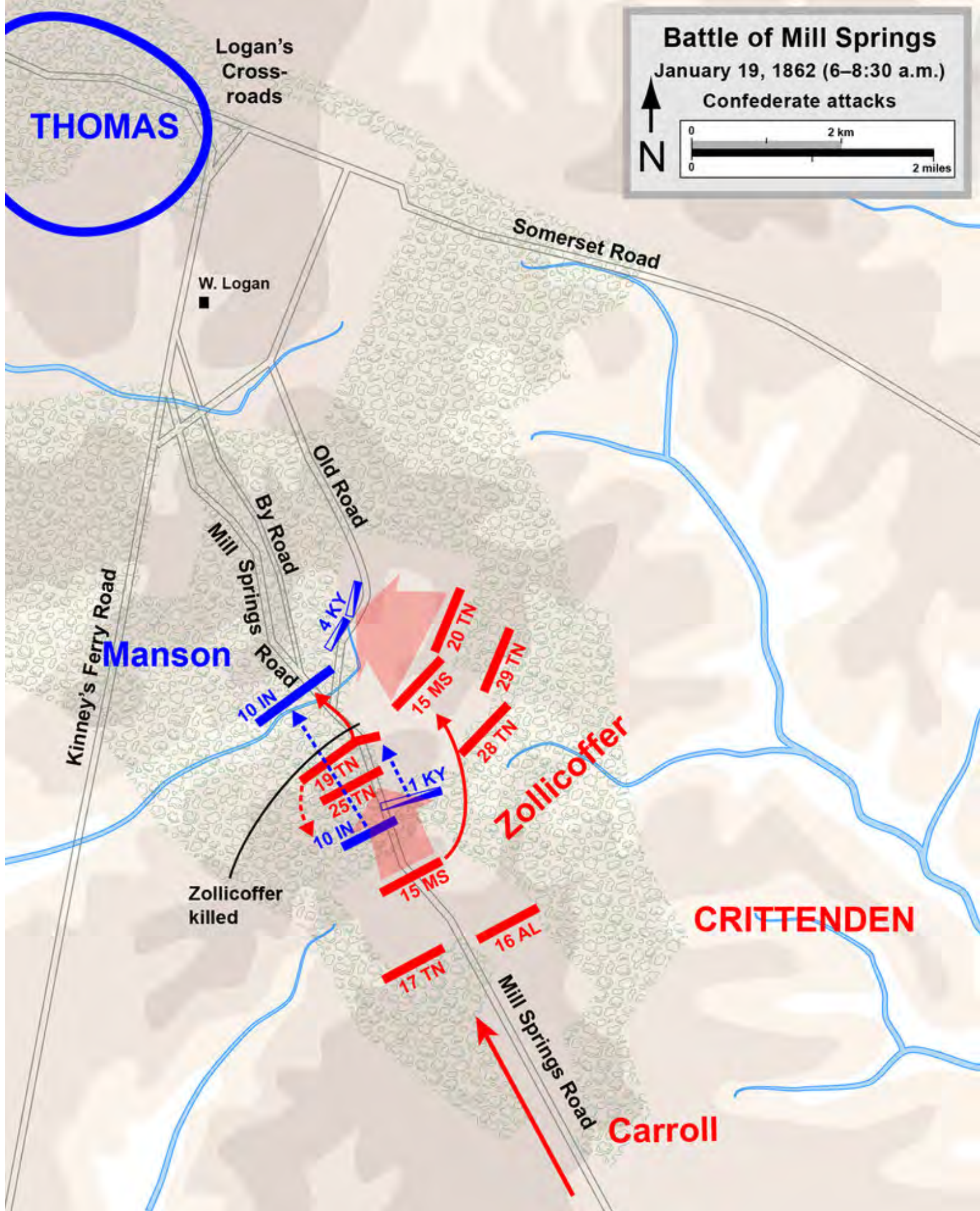
Before coming to KHS, Stuart worked to preserve and interpret Kentucky's largest Civil War battleground as the executive director of the Perryville Battlefield Preservation Association. He has served a number of roles here, including managing KHS's outreach efforts, administering multiple statewide commissions, and communicating the relevance and value of Kentucky history. He is the author of five books, including **The Battle of Mill Springs, Kentucky**, which is the topic of this month's presentation.

**You must register with this new link before the meeting**

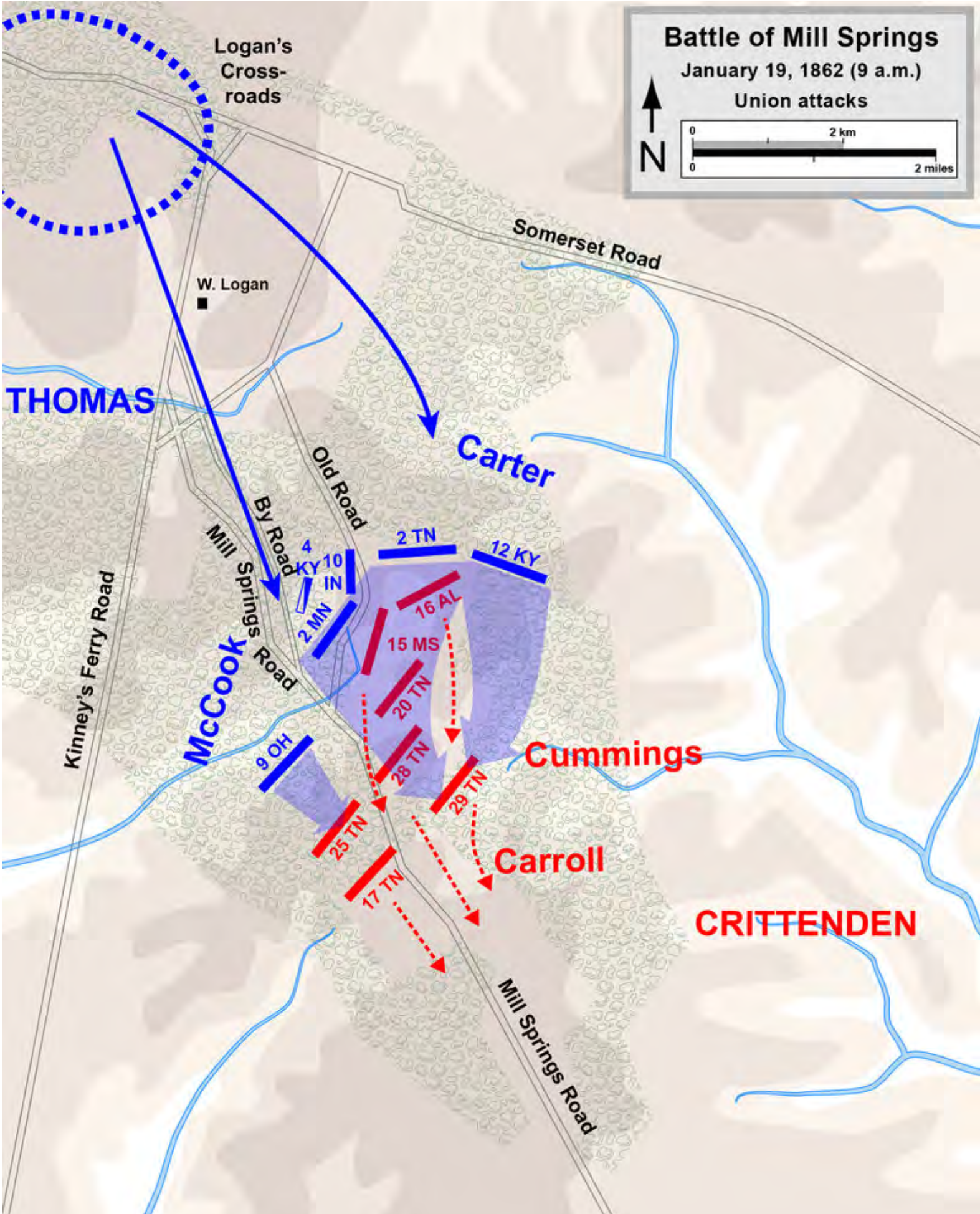
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**Speaker TBD**

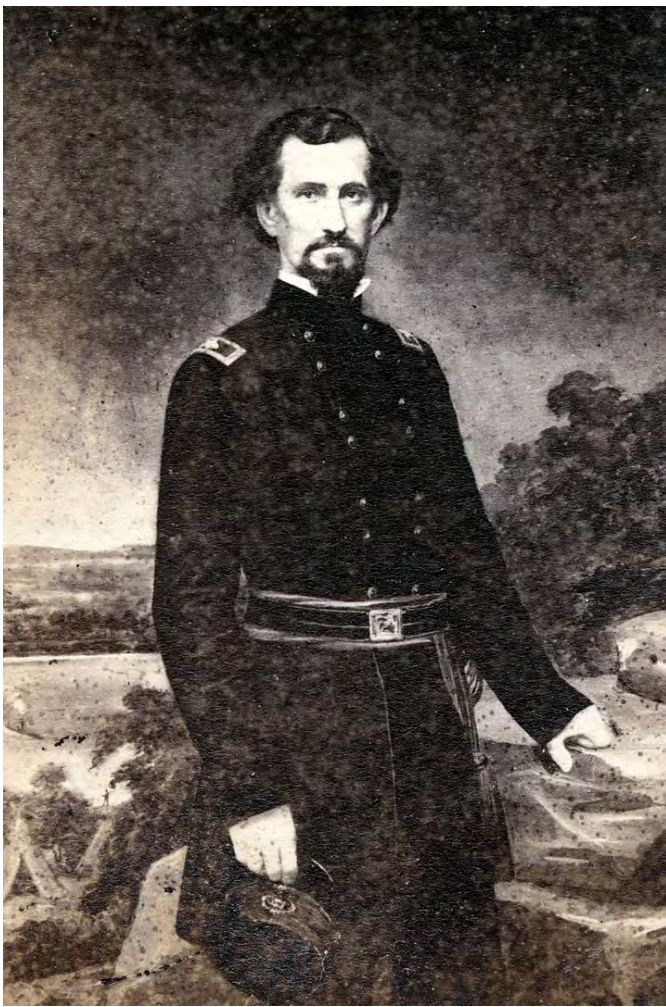












**CSA Brigadier General Felix Kirk Zollicoffer**

**CSA Brigadier General Felix Kirk Zollicoffer** (1812-1862), who died at the Battle of Mill Springs, KY was the first Confederate general to die in the Western Theater.

Zollicoffer was born in Bigbyville, Tennessee and descended from emigrants from Switzerland who initially settled in North Carolina.

He was a newspaperman, slave owner, politician, and soldier. He was also a three-term United States Congressman from Tennessee, an officer in the United States Army, and a Confederate brigadier general during the American Civil War who led the first Confederate invasion of eastern Kentucky. He was killed in action during the confusion and fog at the Battle of Mill Springs where he was mistaken for a Union soldier and shot.

Later Zollicoffer Park, a Confederate Cemetery containing a mass grave of the Confederate fallen lies just outside Nancy, Tennessee where a monument to the General was also erected at the site of his death.





The Battle of Mill Springs, Kentucky on January 19, 1862, was one of the first major Union victories of the war and much celebrated by the press in the North. Romanticized depictions of this battle were carried widely in the media from prints by Currier Ives to sketches in weekly illustrated newspapers at the time. Below are some of those public images which illustrate the battle as a Union rout of the Confederate forces to the untimely death of CSA Brigadier General Felix Zollicoffer.



Currier and Ives lithograph of the Battle of Mill Springs *Library of Congress*



*Battle of Mill Springs,  
newspaper illustration  
from Harper's Weekly  
February 8, 1862 issue*





### BATTLE OF MILL SPRING KY JAN. 19<sup>TH</sup> 1862.

Terrific bayonet charge of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteers (Col. McCook) and total defeat of the Rebel army under Genl. Zollicoffer by the Gallant Soldiers of the West.

This lithograph shows the Battle of Mill Springs in Kentucky. with Union soldiers charging from left toward the center attacking Confederate soldiers as the American flag flies to left. This is another popular Currier & Ives print of this battle, depicting three ranks of Union soldiers advancing in perfect formation while Confederate troops flee in panic, leaving behind dead and wounded soldiers. Without knowing that troops had recently arrived and reinforced the Union army, Rebel forces attacked the North at dawn on January 19, 1862. Initially, the attack was a success, but stiff Union resistance eventually forced the Confederate troops to retreat.



**Did you know that The American Battlefield Trust and it's members have saved more than 832 acres at Mill Springs Battlefield. Consider a donation to American Battlefield Trust help preserve history and battlefields.** <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/civil-war/battles/mill-springs>

**10 Facts: Mill Springs, KY from the American Battlefield Trust**  
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/10-facts-mill-springs>

## Other Resources on the Battle of Mill Spring, Kentucky

<https://www.amazon.com/Battle-Mill-Springs-Kentucky/dp/154023259X/>

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/felix-kirk-zollicoffer-at-the-battle-of-mill-springs.htm>

<https://john-banks.blogspot.com/2020/03/outrageously-treated-souvenir-hunters.html>





BATTLE OF MILL SPRING, ON THE CUMBERLAND RIVER, NEAR JAMESTOWN, BETWEEN A CONFEDERATE FORCE, 8,000 STRONG, UNDER GENERAL ZOLICOFFER, AND THE FEDERAL TROOPS, 4,000 STRONG, COMMANDED BY GENERAL THOMAS, FOUGHT SUNDAY, JANUARY 19th, 1862—FLIGHT OF THE CONFEDERATE ARMY

One of the most dashing, desperate and decisive battles of the war took place on Sunday, January 19th, 1862, when a Confederate army of 8,000 men, led by General Zolicoffer, found, however, that instead of surprising General Thomas, that able and vigilant Federal officer was ready for him. The Confederates fought gallantly throughout that dismal Sabbath day, and owing to their decided superiority in numbers the result was doubtful till near the conclusion of the conflict. The death of Colonel Peyton, who fell gallantly at the head of his regiment, had materially depressed the spirits of the Confederates, but the fall of the commander, Zolicoffer, about ten minutes past three in the afternoon, completed their rout. At that hour, as the Fourth Kentucky Regiment was deploying on the flank of the Confederate army, Zolicoffer, attended by several of his aids, mistook his way in the underwood, and suddenly emerged before Colonel Fry, who was also with several officers. At first they mistook each other for friends, but upon the mistake being discovered one of the Confederate officers fired at Fry and shot his horse. Almost at the same instant Colonel Fry drew his revolver and shot General Zolicoffer through the heart. His aids, seeing their commander slain, deserted the body, which was taken charge of by the Federal troops, and carried to Somerset. The news spread like wildfire through the Confederate army, which fled with precipitation, and at half-past three not a Confederate stood his ground.



There were also several different versions made of the Death of Confederate General Zollicoffer. Here are some which also appeared shortly after the battle and his death.



DEATH OF THE CONFEDERATE GENERAL ZOLLICOFFER, IN THE BATTLE OF MILL SPRING, KY, JANUARY 19th, 1862.

While the Confederate waves were surging against the Federal breakers the opposed lines of battle were several times carried so close to each other that portions of each were mixed up with the other, and hand-to-hand encounters were not unfrequent. Owing to the consequent confusion, the commanders of both sides at times unknowingly came in dangerous vicinity to foes. At one time two mounted officers came trotting along the right flank of the Fourth Kentucky, and noticing their firing upon Confederates near by, shouted to them, "Don't fire on your friends; they are Mississippians." Colonel Fry at this juncture came up the front of his regiment, and with a glance recognized in one of the officers General Zollicoffer. In a twinkling he had pulled out his revolver and fired at the Confederate chieftain, putting a bullet through his breast and causing his fall from the horse and instant death. The Confederate aid put spurs to his horse, and quickly spread the news among the Confederates of the fall of their general.

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Above: Shooting of Confederate General Zollicoffer by Colonel Fry  
Frank Leslie Newspaper

<https://archive.org/details/franklesliesscen00lesl/page/103/mode/1up?view=theater>



Left: This illustration depicts the moment when Felix Zollicoffer was shot during the Battle of Mill Springs. Image Source: New York Public Library Digital Images.





DEATH OF THE CONFEDERATE GENERAL ZOLLIFFER—SKETCHED BY THOMAS NAST.

Above: This print from a wood engraving of a drawing by Thomas Nast. It is from **"Wright's Official and Illustrated War Record"**, Washington, 1898. However, since Nast worked for **"Harper's Weekly"** during the war, it probably first appeared there originally. It is titled **"Death of the Confederate General Zollicoffer"** and shows a Union soldier next to a downed horse shooting the General in the heart with his pistol.

Right: **The War in Kentucky. The Battle of Mill Springs - conveying the dead body of the Rebel General Zollicoffer from the field of Battle at Mill Springs to Somerset.** Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, Feb 8, 1862, front cover of newspaper.







# Phil Kearny Civil War Round Table

## Membership Form

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**The Phil Kearny Round Table**

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REMINDER: New and returning members, Renew your membership in the Phil Kearny CWRT. Each Phil Kearny CWRT Bulletin Newsletter there is always a reminder, and we do accept renewals at any time. Our "membership year" has always been from April to March. So, if you have not yet paid your dues for 2024 (*thank you to those who have already*), now is the perfect time to write that check! You can find my address on the front page of every PKCWRT newsletter as well as on this membership form.

Thank you,  
Norm Dykstra  
PKCWRT Treasurer

