

# Shiloh Battle Turns 150 Years Old

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SHILOH, TENN. (04/05/2012)(readMedia)-- "April 6th, [1862] began with a bright, beautiful morning. The trees were budding, the birds were singing, but none of us dreamed what a dark and bloody ending the day would have," wrote Maj. Thaddeus H. Capron, 55th Illinois Volunteer Infantry from Winnebago County.

Up and down the encampment, sleepy Illinois Soldiers stumbled out of tents cursing. Utensils from mess kits tossed in the air co-mingled and clinked against one another. The lucky ones who had already reassembled their rifles after cleaning grabbed the weapon and searched for officers, while others struggled to assemble their only hope of personal protection. Surprised and rattled officers struggled to get their men in formation. For the Union, the Battle of Shiloh began in mass chaos.

In the pre-dawn hour, Confederates ambushed the Illinoisans, while they prepared for inspection and the stereotypical day that lay ahead. The battle of Shiloh lasted two days. The Union victory claimed 23,746 casualties for both sides. Thirty-six Illinois units were engaged in the bloody battle.

Just days before, the boys enjoyed employing April Fools jokes on one another. Glad to be off the cramped steamboats where they spent weeks traveling to Pittsburg Landing, Tenn., content Soldiers wrote home praising the camp for its beauty. Within a few days time their letters and diary entries turned very dark.

"There is no time to lament for the enemy is right on us, pouring volley after volley into our lines. We return the fire with deadly effect but are forced back inch by inch, leaving our dead and wounded upon the field. Every foot of ground is stubbornly and closely contested. Many of the wounded lay on the field during the rainy, cold night," stated Charles F. Hubert, Adjutant General of the 50th Illinois Infantry Volunteers from Beverly in Adams County in his official report.

Pvt. Will Crummer of Pleasant Valley in Jo Daviess county served in the 45th Illinois Volunteers. He spoke of Soldiers using ramrods to prop themselves up while hobbling through the lines.

"Twice during the night I awoke and could hear the groans and cries of the wounded laying out there in that bloody field. Some cried for water, others for someone to come and help them...God heard them, for the heavens were opened and rain came," he wrote in his memoirs.

Previously under the jurisdiction of the United States War Department, the battlefields were transferred to the park service in 1933. Many Illinois monuments dot the site. In preparation of the 150th anniversary of the battle, the park will host several events including a grand illumination April 7 with 23,746 luminaries that will be placed on the battlefield; one for each casualty.