

ANTIETIM - A SOLDIER IS NOT DEAD BUT CAPTURED

September 1862

By Leslie Korenko

John Woodford was captured, but not injured; however, another soldier with an island connection, Robert Tweedney, was reported killed in action. He wrote to his uncle to assure him that he was not felled at the Battle of Antietam the previous September. His Uncle William had heard of his reported death, so this was good news indeed.

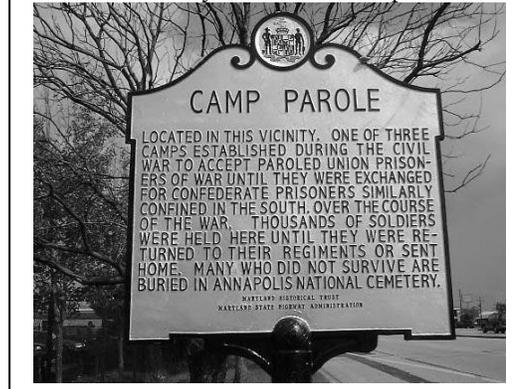
“At the battle of Antietam when a portion of our men were driven from the field of combat by a superior force of the rebels, it is said he was last seen standing his ground loading and firing as fast as he [Twidney] could and was thus carrying on the unequal contest all alone, which caused it to be reported and thoroughly believed until the following letter came to hand, that he was killed and like many of our brave soldiers, thrown into one common and unmarked grave. But whose memory would still mark the pride of after generations yet to come, as they transmitted from one to another the story of him that was willing to sacrifice his life for the same glorious Old Flag which his ancestors had left, in part, in his keeping to honor and protect.”

Robert was the nephew of William and Ann Twidney. The Twidneys settled on the island in 1860 and at this time were operating a boarding house for quarry workers on the south shore. Robert wrote to his Uncle on the island from “Camp Union, Virginia, January 23, 1863 – Dear Uncle. You have probably heard ere this of my having been taken prisoner last September 10th. I was taken to Richmond where we were kept only a week and then paroled and sent to Camp Parole, Maryland, where I remained for three months and then was ordered to report to our Company at which I found myself on the 20th of December.

I have had excellent health all the time since I have been in the service. We are now in the 2nd Kanawha Division, 15 miles from Ganley Bridge. We are very comfortably situated, have...tents and stoves. Our duty is quite severe. We are obliged to go on guard every other day. While in the hands of the Secesh I was used very well for them. Still would rather not take the trip again. There are no hopes of procuring a furlough this winter, as our force is needed here, for an attack is not improbable. Robert Tweedny”

This historical marker at the site of Camp Parole, Maryland reads: Located in this vicinity, one of three camps established to accept paroled Union prisoners of war until they were exchanged for Confederate prisoners similarly confined in the South over the course of the war. Thousands of soldiers were held here until they were returned to their regiments or sent home. Many of those soldiers who did not survive are buried in Annapolis National Cemetery.

Robert Tweedney was sent to Camp Parole.



Prisoners were sometimes held in parole camps instead of being sent to prison while awaiting exchange. They were not allowed to bear arms but could work while at the camp. In some cases, the paroled men were actually sent home until they were officially exchanged. The two sides would agree to exchange prisoners, based on an exchange rate for officers and soldiers, and once exchanged, the men were then able to return to service.

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