



July 2021

Following the Hoofprints License Plate to a Church Sanctuary in Springfield



In early 1862, after the fall of Confederate Forts Henry and Donelson, Union soldiers occupied the town of Springfield, staying through the end of the War. Their mission was to control the town and guard the Edgefield and Kentucky Railroad. This battlefield preservation supporter explored still visible signs of their occupation while visiting the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield a portion of which is the original 1839 church.



During the occupation of Springfield, the First Presbyterian Church sanctuary was used as a stable by Union cavalry. The well preserved 1839 sanctuary is a part of the present-day church. The two doors in the above photo are the church's original entrance doors (one for women and one for men) Union horses entered the room through these doors. The floor is the original sanctuary floor.



Hoofprints or gouges from the horseshoes and stains are still visible on the preserved poplar floor. One account of the church history suggests a cover was placed over the floor to hide the evidence of these "ugly souvenirs." Some accounts suggest the church also was used as a hospital.

Occupied Springfield and Robertson County

When Union forces moved into Middle Tennessee and made Springfield a military base, occupation took a toll on the residents. Residents complained that soldiers had stolen their food, forage, wagons and animals – usually without payment. Among the violent incidents, in late 1864, following an argument and shoot-out between Union soldiers and a plantation owner, Union soldiers shot the plantation owner and burned many of the farm buildings. Residents also found themselves the target of guerilla activity in the area increasing their feelings of being unsafe and insecure. One woman believed "...there to be more rogues than honest people now" while another woman longed to be where "...law and order ruled the land."

While there were no major military actions in the county, both armies moved men and materials through. In October, 1862 **Confederate General John Hunt Morgan** led a cavalry raid destroying

the Dead Horse Railroad Trestle near Ridgetop. In 1863 federal authorities recruited escaped slaves to form units of the **US Colored Troops (USCT)**. In 1864 the **15th USCT** formed part of the Union garrison in Springfield.

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