Young Marylanders in Gray

As many as 15,000 Marylanders served with the Confederate forces, and the Rebel service of several former MAC students among that number began with a harrowing trip south to enlist.

In July 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Militia Act of 1862, declaring all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 45 subject to militia service and setting the stage for a national draft. Within a few weeks, he issued a call for 300,000 men that, if not answered by volunteers, would consist of militia members. The growing possibility of being drafted to serve for the hated Union cause pushed many Confederate sympathizers to take drastic action to join the other side.

Four MAC classmates, William N. Bean, James P. Hambleton, Robert B. Waring, and his younger brother, William, enlisted in Charlottesville, Virginia, on the same day, September 10, 1862. They had all “run the blockade,” the term used to describe the dangerous journey across disputed territory. It required keeping the plan quiet at home, knowing who could be trusted along the way, and steering clear of Union scouts and boats assigned to flush them out. For James P. Hambleton and Robert B. Waring, the risk paid off. About a month after their enlistment, their names appeared in the Baltimore Sun on a list of drafted men.

Once mustered into Company B of the 1st Maryland Cavalry, the paths of the MAC classmates diverged, but their records reveal hardship-filled experiences of captivity and exchange, punctuated by bouts of illness common to Civil War soldiers on both sides.

William N. Bean was captured and released as part of a prisoner exchange in December 1862. In late 1863, he was hospitalized for over a month with skin disease before returning to duty. Captured again in March 1865, he was kept briefly at Fort Monroe in Virginia, then transferred to Point Lookout Prison in southern Maryland. After signing an oath of loyalty on June 10, 1865, he was released to return to his home in St. Mary’s County.

James P. Hambleton was seized on July 4, 1863, at Monterey Pass, as Confederate troops retreated from Gettysburg. He was held briefly at Fort Delaware, then later at Fort McHenry. Treated in Baltimore and Richmond hospitals for chronic diarrhea, he was furloughed until officially exchanged for Union prisoners. By early 1864, he was back with his company and remained with it until the end of the war.

The military service of Robert and William Waring was much shorter in duration. Robert died of typhoid fever just four months after his enlistment, and William was discharged after his brother’s death.