

William A. Holland, (23 Feb 1833 – 2 Sep 1908), Newspaper Clipping, The Perry Historians

William A. Holland: A Famous Bucktail

William A. Holland played an important part in the history of the old Bucktails. He enlisted April 19, 1861, at the old Iron Works Warehouse in Duncannon as a member of the Morgan Rifles, Company B, of the 42nd Regiment. Company B was under the command of Captain Langhorne Wister, a prominent businessman in the area.

Holland, whose home was near "the run" at Clark Street, just at the edge of Baskinsville, had to say goodbye to his wife **Maggie (Wahl)** who was about to give birth to their first son, **William M. Holland**. Holland's enlistment was for a period of three years.

William A. Holland became well-known following the Sectional War through his journals and poetry. He had kept a continuous record of events including battles, casualties, and everyday happenings such as dances, drills, and stories. His poetry described the sad life of a soldier in such works as the Picket Guard and The Bucktails. It was his published works which helped make the 42nd Regiment a legend in history. **William Holland's** journal appears later in this book.

After being discharged on June 14, 1864, **William A. Holland** continued writing. He was known as the "Inkstand Man" of Duncannon, a local philosopher. He worked a short time for the Iron Works and as a Justice of the Peace, and in addition, he served on the School Board. He was a reporter at heart, however, and worked for the Newport News, the Harrisburg Telegraph, and as an Associate Editor of the Duncannon Record.

One of the most touching poems from the period of our Civil War is the one written by **William A. Holland**, one of our own Bucktails. When first printed, it brought tears to many eyes, and few will read it unmoved even after a lapse of a century. It appears on the following page, along with another of his more famous compositions.

THE PICKET GUARD

*All quiet along the Potomac, they say,
Except now and then a stray picket
is shot, as he walks on his beat to and fro,
By a rifleman hid in the thicket.*

*'Tis nothing - a private or two, now and then,
Will not count in the news of the battle;
Not an officer lost - only one of the men
Moaning out all alone, the death rattle.*

*All quiet along the Potomac tonight,
Where the soldiers lie peacefully dreaming;
Their tents in the rays of the clear autumn moon,*

Or the light of the watch-fire gleaming.

*A tremulous sigh as the gentle night wind
Through the forest leaves softly is creeping;
While stars up above, with their glittering eyes
Keep guard - for the enemy is sleeping.*

*There's only the sound of the low sentry tread,
As he tramps from the rock to the fountain,
And he thinks of the two, in the low trundle bed,
Far away in the cot on the mountain.*

*His musket falls slack - his face, dark and grim,
Grown and with memories tender,
As he mutters a prayer for the children asleep,
For their mother - may heaven defend her!*

*The moon seems to shine just as brightly as then -
That night when the love yet unspoken
Leaped up to her lips, when low murmured vows,
Were pledged, to be ever unbroken.*

*Then drawing his sleeve roughly over his eyes
He dashes off tears that are welling;
And gathers his gun closer up to his place,
As if to keep down the heart swelling.*

*He passed the fountain, the blasted pine tree;
The footstep is lagging and weary;
Yet onward he goes, through the broad belt of light,
Toward the shade of the forest so dreary.*

*Hark! was it the night wind that rustled the leaves?
It looked like a rifle - "Ah! Mary, good-bye!"
And the life blood is ebbing and splashing.*

*All quiet along the Potomac to-night!
No sound save the rush of the river;
While soft falls the dew on the face of the dead,
The picket's off duty forever!*

Published in The Duncannon Record, August 24, 1888, by **William A. Holland**

THE BUCKTAILS

*Come give me your attention, and a story I'll relate,
Of a regiment of soldiers, from the glorious Keystone State,
Who came to fight for freedom's cause, our banner to sustain;
And many of those noble men will ne'er return again.*

*We were organized at Harrisburg, we are the Bucktail boys;
We have fought in several battles, and heard a little noise;
We fear not rebel bullets nor cannon's awful roar;
But we've witnessed scenes of carnage which we hope to see no more.*

*From Harrisburg to Cumberland, in Western Maryland,
We with the Fifth Reserve did go, a jovial little band.
From thence to Piedmont and New Creek, in West Virginia,
Charles J. Biddle was our Colonel, of Philadelphia.*

*From West Virginia back again to Harrisburg we came
And soon we left for Sandyhook on board a railroad train,
From Sandybrook to Tannelleytown we next our course did steer;
Then we found out the whole Reserve had arrived there.*

*We crossed the Potomac River and to Langley we went,
And there we passed the winter all quiet and content;
There 'Colonel Biddle' left us and McNeil of Company D,
Was elected over Thomas Kane by a large majority.*

*While laying at Camp Pierpont, on the twentieth of December,
We had a little battle, which you all no doubt remember;
It was near the town of Drainesville, where we made the rebels run;
We gave them a sound drubbing, and thought it was only fun.*

*The next place that you heard of us is at Mechanicsville.
Where the rebels thought to whip us, but I think they got their fill;
We went from there to Gaines Hill, that was an awful day,
The rebel Jackson flanked us, and we had to get away.*

*From Gaines Hill we went to White Oak Swamp, and thought our troubles o'er;
But we had not long been there, until we heard the cannon's roar.
They were close upon us, that we had a dreadful fight,
And many of our noble boys lay on the field that night.*

*From White Oak Swamp to Malvern Hill we went without delay,
And fearful was the battle which was fought there on that day;
The little Monito was near and her iron hull did pour,
The Rebs have since acknowledged, that they were defeated sore.*

*To Harrison's Landing next on board the transports we did go,
And next morning we were anchored away down at Fort Monroe;
A storm was raging terribly, which caused us some delay,
But soon as it abated, we steamed away for Aquia.*

*From Aquia to Falmouth, and from thence to Warrentown;
And the next place that you hear of us fighting at Bull Run,
And here the rebels flanked us, and caused us to fall back,
Had Porter brought the Fifth Corps up, we'd have whipped them in a crack.*

*We next went into Maryland to meet old Bobby Lee;
We found him on South Mountain, and dressed him handsomely;
We drove to Antietam, and there made a stand,
But he found he was no match for Mac, so he left "My Maryland."*

*It was here McNeil our Colonel fell, while fighting gallantly;
Also Lieutenant Allison, who commanded Company B;
And many other noble men fell fighting in their place;
But to give their names in detail, I have neither time nor space.*

*We next did meet at Fredericksburg, where the Rebs were fortified,
Our army was commanded by Ambrose E. Burnside,
We tried to break the rebel lines, but found they were too strong
The way they threw shot and shell, we could not stand it long.*

*From Fredericksburg to Gettysburg the rebel Lee did steer,
And he had not long to wait, until the Bucktails did appear;
It was there he got a lamming, and he soon found out indeed,
That he'd better leave for rebeldom, as he had got too much Meade.*

*Here we lost another Colonel, Charles F. Taylor was his name;
He was a brave commander and deserves no little fame.
There were many more gave up their lives, on that memorable day;
They each deserve a monument, sacred to their memory.*

*From Gettysburg wandered back to old Virginia's shore,
We have often met the Rebels and heard the cannon's roar;
We have crossed the Rappahannock, also the Rapidan;
They shelled us some at Mine Run, but we did not lose a man.*

*In the battles of the Wilderness I'd have you all observe,
We were in all the engagements along with the Reserve,
From the fifth until the thirty-first of May, eighteen and sixty-four,
We were fighting nearly every day, along with the Fifth Corps.*

A word about the Generals, who have commanded the Reserve,

*They on the page of history a noble name deserve-
Brave Reynolds, Meade and Seymour, and also Gallant Ord;
McCandless too though last, not least, is placed upon record.*

*I am now about to leave you my comrades bold and brave,
I hope the Stars and Stripes may soon triumphant wave,
O'er North and South, o'er East and West, and all America;
Now I'll leave Virginia's bloody soil for Pennsylvania.*

*Now in conclusion, I have only one more word to say,
It is about the veterans who have resolved to stay;
May the God above protect you, and bring you safely through;
Now with your permission, I will bid you all adieu.*

By **W. A. Holland** of Company B, printed Nov. 23, 1933