

Lieutenant Colonel William McCullough (1811-1862)

William McCullough was born on September 11, 1811, in Flemingsburg, Kentucky, to Peter and Levina McCullough. In 1826, the family moved to McLean County, Illinois, to the Dry Grove area. William's father ran a tavern, which was a place for people to gather. As a young boy, William helped his family by working on a farm. His wife, Mary, who knew him from when they were children, said that he was very determined and hardworking.

On April 23, 1832, William joined the army during the Black Hawk War. He became a private in Brigadier-General Samuel Whiteside's Brigade, and his company was led by Captain M.L. Covell in the Fifth Regiment of Mounted Volunteers. This war was fought against Native American tribes in the Midwest, mainly the Sauk and Fox tribes, who were trying to take back their land in Illinois. After several battles, the war ended in August 1832, and a treaty forced the Native Americans to leave Illinois and move west.

After the war, William married Mary Williams in December 1833. They had eight children, but only four survived to adulthood: Nannie, Fannie, William, and Howard.

In 1840, William lost his right arm in a farming accident involving a threshing machine. He stayed calm during the painful operation to amputate his arm, even though there was no anesthesia. That same year, he was elected Sheriff of McLean County, a job he held for three terms. Later, in 1846, he became Circuit Clerk and served for four terms. He was known as a hardworking and efficient county officer.

When the Civil War started, William joined the Union Army, even though he had only one arm and a weak eye. With permission from President Abraham Lincoln, whom he knew personally, William joined the Fourth Illinois Cavalry as a Lieutenant Colonel. He fought in major battles, including those at Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, and Shiloh. Sadly, on December 5, 1862, William was killed in battle near Coffeeville, Mississippi. His regiment was surrounded by Confederate forces at night, and despite being ordered to surrender, William refused. He was shot and killed while leading his men. His soldiers escaped, and they later recovered his body.

After his death, William was honored by many people in McLean County. A special meeting was held to bring his body back home, and a large funeral procession took place in Bloomington on December 18, 1862. Abraham Lincoln sent a heartfelt letter to William's daughter, Fannie, offering his condolences. Lincoln praised William as a brave and honorable man.

William McCullough's funeral was one of the largest in McLean County at the time. He was buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington, Illinois. He was remembered as a beloved public official and a hero who gave his life for his country.