

The Bar Harbor Times

August 10, 2006

Family history

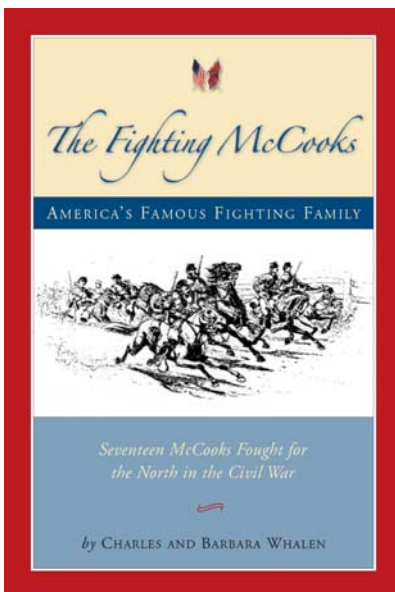
Review by Greg Fish

“The Fighting McCooks,” Charles and Barbara Whalen’s historical novel about 17 members of one family who fought for the Union Army in the Civil War, is a well-crafted book and as detailed as any of David McCullough histories of that era. The subjects, the McCooks, may not be well remembered these days, but they should be: Consider the fact that there were three major generals, three brigadier generals, one naval lieutenant, four surgeons, two colonels, one major, one lieutenant, one private and one chaplain in their ranks – impressive credentials, indeed.

And they didn’t just sit idly on the McCook ranks. Roderick McCook was the first naval officer to capture a Confederate regiment. Robert McCook led the first successful bayonet charge. Henry McCook was known as the fighting chaplain. In the book, the

McCooks are followed through 46 battlefields in 11 states, and across land and sea.

The Whalens tell their tale well, with plentiful research (the bibliography at the book’s end lists nine pages of sources) and



brief but highly detailed accounts of each of these brave men. And

the details offered are wonderful; consider the following descriptive passage from the first page:

“...Daniel McCook and sixty assorted Westerners, wearing stovepipe hats and wielding guns with fixed bayonets, marched spiritedly on the thick velvet carpet. They were drilling to the shrill order of a notorious Kansas gunslinger, clad in a torn short and rusty coat, who strutted the ballroom waving a high sword under the glittering gaslight from three enormous chandeliers.”

I was hooked then and there, and read “The Fighting McCooks” in two lengthy sessions; it was time well spent. A good read, and definitely a must for Civil War buffs.

Mr. and Mrs. Whalen will be signing copies of “The Fighting McCooks” at 7 p.m. on Aug. 11 at Sherman’s bookstore, 56 Main St., Bar Harbor. To reserve a signed copy, or for more information, please call 288-3161. ■