

A REPUBLIC WITHIN THE CONFEDERACY AND
OTHER RECOLLECTIONS OF 1864.

BY W. A. DUCKWORTH.

In January, 1864, at Pulaski, Tennessee, I was appointed a Lieutenant in the 110th Colored Infantry. I had been serving as Corporal of Company G, 2d Iowa Veteran Infantry. After guarding a tunnel and trestle work on the railway near Pulaski, I was assigned, with six companies of the regiment, to garrison the town and district of Athens, Alabama. Col. Wallace Campbell of the 110th, was in command of the post and district.

My own company was detailed as provost guard, and was quartered in a building on the northwest corner of the public square in Athens. I was very pleasantly situated during the spring and summer, and my duties, while constant, were not arduous. I boarded with a family by the name of Tanner, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Tanner and three grown daughters. One of the daughters was a widow, her husband having been killed about the time of the battle of Shiloh, in a cavalry skirmish near their home. We patrolled the town and I scouted a good deal with a detachment of East Tennessee Cavalry. Quite a number of prisoners were picked up by us on these expeditions, and we captured a quantity of medicine that was being smuggled through the lines from Nashville, for the use of the Confederate army in the field. I made one capture, near the Tennessee river, between Huntsville and Decatur, of a lady, with a fine horse and buggy. This lady had in her possession about three thousand dollars' worth of quinine and morphine.

We also made a survey of the country for military purposes, locating all roads, bridges, streams, and tactical points of defense which might be made available in the future operations of the army.

Civil affairs were administered through the provost marshal's office and as I acted in the capacity of provost marshal, it fell to me a good part of the time to preside over civil suits. I heard many complaints, and adjusted numerous differences. In connection with my duties, I issued marriage licenses, rented houses, collected license taxes from all persons in mercantile business of whatsoever sort, issued provisions to refugees and other indigent persons and had supervision over the county jail. This was well filled with prisoners of almost every variety and description, some of the desperate characters being kept in irons.

Some colored soldiers of Capt. Adam Poe's¹ company of the 111th regiment were employed in guarding a bridge on the outskirts of Athens, and were quartered in a block house. A party of these, while out marauding at night, murdered a farmer named Tanner and pillaged his house. Tanner's wife was bedfast at the time.

Naturally, there was much excitement in the town and county over this murder. Measures were at once taken to apprehend the criminals, and with the aid of a very efficient detective named Louis Kimmel, from St. Louis, we captured them, and had them safely in the jail at the time of our capture by General Forrest in September. Just what disposition General Forrest made of them I never knew for certain. There was a rumor when we were captured, that he had hung them summarily when the jail was taken by his forces.

There was a female seminary in Athens, under the supervision of a lady from Washington. We kept a guard stationed in the seminary grounds and often visited the institution. As a rule we timed our visits so as to be present at the morning exercises.

Under the military regulations, no person was allowed outside his or her domicile after dark without a pass or escort. There were no meetings of any kind at night, except an occa-

¹Capt. Adam Poe was a son of the Adam Poe who was at that time connected with the Methodist Book Concern, at Cincinnati, and a grandson of the Adam Poe who killed the big footed Indian, of which an account is given in the early history of Ohio and Kentucky.

sional dance which was under military supervision or surveillance.

The members of the Masonic Lodge met in the afternoon. I met with them often and was treated with great consideration. I also attended a few select parties, and at one of them, I remember, I came very near getting too much eggnog. It was made by a different formula from what I had been used to.

The most disagreeable duty which devolved upon me while at Athens, was caring for a lady prisoner who was being banished as a spy through the Confederate lines, under a flag of truce. Being a lady of respectable appearance, I did not send her to the common prison, but accepted her word of honor not to attempt to escape. I communicated by flag of truce with General Roddy of the Confederate forces across the river, concerning her reception, and in the meantime paid her board and lodging at the hotel for two days.

The only armed foes with whom we came in contact during the summer, were the forces of General Wheeler who fired on our picket lines while raiding through the country. This was about the first week in September, and the incident of course created a furor for a few days.

General Hood moved North during the latter part of September with the purpose of striking General Sherman's communications, preparatory to his campaign into Tennessee that resulted in the terrible battles of Franklin and Nashville and utterly destroyed his army. General Forrest, the forerunner of Hood, crossed the Tennessee river at Mussel Shoals below Decatur, and on the 23d of September struck Athens in force. The pickets were driven in about noon, and there was more or less skirmishing all the afternoon.

The fort built by order of General Dodge for the defense of Athens, was about three-fourths of a mile from the public square in a westerly direction, varying a little south. As my own company was quartered on the corner of the square and was the only one in town, we had quite a spirited time during the afternoon and until about nine o'clock at night. The

Confederates burned the railway depot which was situated in the public square, and the Quartermaster's stores on the south side, before we evacuated the town.

Between eight and nine o'clock a detachment of the enemy's cavalry coming up the street from the west, stampeded a team attached to a wagon being loaded by the men of my company in front of their quarter. A little later we captured a sergeant and four privates who as a guard for the night were trying to find General Buford's headquarters, which they informed us were at a certain house in the adjoining block. We sent them under guard to the fort as prisoners.

About nine o'clock in the evening we marched out of the town to the fort, and I was detailed with sixteen picked men from my company for picket duty, on the side of the fort next the town. The fort was held until about nine o'clock the next morning. During the night, the Confederate forces had closely invested the fort and were using their artillery and sharpshooters in a lively manner.

About nine o'clock in the morning a flag of truce was sent in by the Confederates, demanding the surrender of the fort and the Federal forces. The flag was borne by Major Strange, General Forrest's Adjutant General, was received by me on my picket post and was forwarded to Colonel Campbell's headquarters in the fort. Upon receiving it Colonel Campbell ordered us all into the fort. After he had ridden out through General Forrest's lines and satisfied himself as to the numbers of the Confederates, he returned and entered into a formal surrender. Some of our colored soldiers had to be forced to give up their arms. The flag was hauled down and trailed in the dust and we were prisoners of war.

During the negotiations for our surrender, the 18th Michigan and the 102d Ohio were surrounded and captured within two miles of Athens while coming to our relief from the post at Decatur. They made a determined resistance and we could plainly hear the firing, but were powerless to join them. They were brought in and added to the crowd of prisoners. There were about three hundred of them, while the prisoners taken

in the fort numbered six hundred. General Forrest's forces numbered about seven thousand.

Several officers, not of our forces, were taken prisoner in the fort. They were on their way to the front, and were delayed at Athens on account of the railway bridges being destroyed. Two of them I remember were Col. Eli Lily of the 7th Indiana Cavalry, and Captain Callahan, of the 1st Missouri Light Artillery.

We were treated fairly well and were allowed to retain our side arms and private property, including our money. After being *herded* on the commons outside of the fort for a few hours, we were started south, and crossed the Tennessee river near Florence, Alabama.

We were marched twenty-five miles per day by our captors, and fed on cold water and ears of corn. The only way we had of preparing the corn for eating was to char the outer ends of the grains while on the cob.

At Bear Creek, however, we were stopped and furnished corn meal, flour, bacon, and what we thought was the best beef we had ever tasted. We were very hungry. After crossing Bear Creek we were put aboard the cars, passing through Iuka and Corinth. There were three trains of eight common freight and stock cars each, with a wheezy old engine for each train. The prisoners were inside of the cars and the guards on top. After passing Tupelo one of the trains was wrecked by the breaking down of a culvert which resulted in the total destruction of a car and the killing and crippling of seven guards and three prisoners.

About a half mile west of Okolona, the trains were all stopped. We disembarked and were *herded* on the prairie and allowed to cook and eat our dinners. We were guarded from the time of our capture until our arrival at Meridian, Mississippi, by the 20th Tennessee Mounted Infantry. They were old soldiers from the firing line, which was a godsend to us. We fared on the trip the same as they did. At Meridian, Home Guards took charge of us, relieving the 20th Tennessee, and we found them very exacting and hard to please.

While dinner was being prepared at Okolona I was permitted by one of the captains of our guard, who was a Mason, to go up to the city, with a Lieutenant Milligan, whom I vouched for, to get our dinners. We went without an escort. Some of the citizens gazed at us quite hard but we were not molested. We got our dinners at a private house where we furnished the "sure enough coffee", a small supply of which we had left. The lady of the house shared this with us with the greatest of pleasure, it being the first real coffee she had tasted for three years. While the prisoners at camp were getting their dinners, a man of the 18th Michigan, being given permission to go outside of the guard line to attend the call of nature, kept edging away and edging away, after being repeatedly told to come back. He finally made a break across the field to a piece of jack oak woods. He was followed and perhaps fifty shots fired at him without effect. The jack oak timber was very dense in that country and the man was comparatively safe as soon as he reached its shelter. He succeeded in making his escape.

Boarding the train again after dinner, we proceeded to Meridian, Mississippi, where we were confined in a stockade prison pen for one day and night. Then we were taken south fifteen miles on the Mobile & Ohio railway to Enterprise. This was a town of ten or twelve hundred inhabitants, on the Pascagoula river. Here we were paroled and given the limits of the town, which was about a mile by a mile and a half in area.

The Pascagoula river at Enterprise was about one hundred feet wide and very deep. The town was situated on both sides of the river. The railway depot and business section was on the east side and the resident section on the west. We prisoners were quartered in the residence portion, occupying a number of vacant houses and boarding with the citizens. There were one hundred and nineteen of us at Enterprise, consisting of the commissioned officers captured at Athens and vicinity, the non-commissioned officers and privates having been sent to Cahaba, Alabama.

We succeeded in getting board at fifty cents per day each in Confederate money. Confederate money at that time was worth from a seventh to a fourteenth of its nominal value in United States "greenbacks". That is to say, one dollar in greenbacks was worth from seven to fourteen dollars in Confederate paper money.

The Confederates furnished us with beef, bacon and flour. The balance of our provisions, chiefly sweet potatoes, we purchased in the town market. These we not only ate but also charred them in the vessel on the fire and used them as a substitute for coffee. We had plenty of money and our good clothes, and never fared better at any time during the war, which is a different story from that told by most prisoners of war.

On Sundays we attended church. One Methodist preacher, in his leading prayer, besought the Lord to rain fire and brimstone on the heads of the Yankees who were invading the Southern states. His prayer did not disturb us greatly, as we had our doubts about the Lord's willingness to perform the service asked of Him, but we did have some trouble with a fiery Irish lieutenant who resented that kind of petition to the throne of grace. We calmed the lieutenant down, however, and would not allow him to attend church any more where that preacher was in charge of the services.

We were at Enterprise on the day of the presidential election in November, 1864, but could not vote, though nearly every man was in favor of Lincoln's election.

We had a very pleasant time during our stay at Enterprise, with no particular disturbance. A few of our men did participate a little too generously in a lot of whisky of a very poor quality which they succeeded in finding; but this fortunately resulted in no detriment to the other prisoners. We visited with the citizens, but paid our visits at night. They were fearful of being denounced to the military authorities if they showed too much friendship with us.

The people of Jones county, Mississippi, which corners with Clark, the county in which Enterprise is situated, had seceded

from the Southern Confederacy and organized a government of their own, which they designated the "Republic of Jones". This small republic had a president, secretary of war, and other officials and an army which was well organized and equipped. Their leader and military commander was General Newton Knight. They had given the Confederate Government considerable trouble the year previous, and a small division of the Confederate army had been sent, under the command of General Maury, to suppress them but with only partial success. This infant republic was at war with the United States, as well as with the Confederate States, and when they learned that a lot of Federal prisoners were confined at Enterprise they organized an expedition to murder us.

Tidings of this projected action reached Enterprise and caused quite a commotion, not only in our quarters but in the town as well. We were unarmed, with the exception of a few small revolvers, and there were only fourteen Confederate soldiers in the town. It was garrisoned as a military post, under command of a major and one lieutenant, with fourteen non-commissioned officers and privates, all belonging to their invalid corps. The whole country, it is to be understood, was under military rule. So, prisoners and garrison, acting in conjunction, organized night guards, consisting of two Yankee officers and one Confederate soldier on each guard post stationed on the roads leading west and south, on the west side of the river. We also kept a detachment at the river bridge, with orders to remove the planking as soon as all the people were over, in case the town was attacked. Prisoners were located along the principal streets that led south and west, with clubs in their hands, and their orders were, to strike the plank fences and then send the signal along the streets to the Methodist Church, where a man was stationed to ring the bell the instant the signal was given.

The ringing of the bell was to be the rallying tocsin for all the people on the opposite side of the river to hasten across the bridge and proceed to the depot, where the Confederate major had two railway trains in readiness. These trains were

kept fired up day and night for several days. But for some reason the forces from the Jones County Republic failed to appear—and we were permitted to continue at Enterprise in peace.

The last week in November, we were sent through the lines to Memphis, Tennessee, by the way of Meridian, Jackson, Canton, Grenada and Hernando under the escort of a Methodist preacher who was a captain in the Confederate army and connected with the Exchange Bureau. He was very kind to us and took charge of a lot of Confederate money which we had procured, at twenty-one dollars for one of our money, from post funds which we had saved when captured. The captain delivered this money to our enlisted men who were confined at Cahaba, Alabama, along with some articles of wearing apparel which we sent them, thus proving himself a man of honor and good faith.

We were not guarded on the trip from Enterprise to our line near Memphis; we made it a point to keep with our escort. We were delayed at a number of places on account of the miserable condition of the railway lines, particularly at Canton and other towns between Jackson and Hernando. At Canton we were delayed one night and a part of a day, but had a nice dance in a vacant hotel building, participated in by natives as well as by a goodly number of our party. We secured meals at the homes of a number of the citizens who treated us kindly but had little to say.

From Grenada to Hernando there were no engines to haul the trains, which were flat cars drawn by horses, the bridges being planked for that purpose. At some of the broken bridges we walked across or were taken over in boats, changing to other cars. We met a detachment of our cavalry under a flag of truce, after passing the Confederate lines between Hernando and Memphis. The detachment was composed in part of Company G, 3d Iowa Cavalry, many members of whom are now living in Van Buren county, Iowa.

We were delivered up to the United States Army, and were once more under the protecting care of the Old Flag.

After about forty days at the Parole Camp in St. Louis and at home, we were declared exchanged by the Secretary of War, E. M. Stanton, and ordered to report to General Sherman at Savannah, Georgia. Going by way of New York we took passage to Savannah on the steamer Fulton, a large side-wheeler and reported to General Sherman just in time to go on the campaign through the Carolinas to Goldsboro, North Carolina.

DAVENPORT,

Saturday, November 9, 1839.

November 6, a pleasant day—snow disappeared from the ground before noon.—7, a hard frost last night—the first we have had during the fall. A warm and pleasant day, after sunset the west was decked in its richest hues, the few clouds that hung about the horizon were fringed with the richest gold, and the whole heavens appeared to be lit up by rays of light reflected from the unruffled bosom of the great western ocean. No pen can describe, no pencil paint the beauties of a western sunset on such an evening. 8, a beautiful morning, the air rather cold, fine day, more like April than November, not a cloud to be seen, or a breath of wind to ruffle the bosom of the majestic Mississippi. The Steamer Trubedore arrived from DuBuque yesterday, and left this day for St. Louis.—Editorial. Davenport, *Iowa Sun*, Nov. 13, 1839.

“*The Western Adventurer and Advocate of Free Discussion*” has just been established in the Far West—published simultaneously at Commerce, Illinois, and Montrose, Wisconsin, on a large and fair sheet, at \$2 per annum. We are surprised that so large and fair a paper can be afforded at that price so far West. It seems to be devoted in good part to the discussion of Slavery.—Th. Gregg, Editor. Albany, N. Y.—*The Jeffersonian*, March 3, 1838.