SOURCE MATERIAL OF IOWA HISTORY

[Iowa newspapers of the Civil War years contain many first-hand accounts of the life of the Union soldier — at camp, in battle, and — occasionally — in prison. Most of these are letters, written by the soldiers for the hometown papers. On January 10, 1865, the Fort Dodge *North West* announced: "We commence the publication of the experiences and observations of the 'Fort Dodge Drummer Boy,' in this paper. George belongs to one of the best families in this place, and his statement which we have taken down for publication is entirely reliable." There followed, in the issues of January 10 and 17, the story of George A. Tod, who had enlisted in Company I, 32nd Iowa Infantry, as a drummer boy when only sixteen years of age (not fifteen, as stated by the editor). He was born in Pennsylvania on March 19, 1846, the son of Samuel and Jane (McLean) Tod. His parents moved west in the 1850's, first to Rock Island, Illinois, and then, in 1856, to Fort Dodge, where Samuel operated a sawmill. George enlisted in the service on October 7, 1862; in February of 1864, while with his regiment in Mississippi, he was taken prisoner. For months his family heard nothing from him; then, on December 31, 1864, he arrived at Fort Dodge with the story of his experiences in Southern prisons. Following a brief furlough he rejoined his regiment and was mustered out on July 10, 1865, at Montgomery, Alabama. After the war he returned to his native state of Pennsylvania. — EDITOR.]

ADVENTURES OF GEO. A. TOD
AN IOWA DRUMMER BOY IN REBEL PRISONS AT CAHAWBA AND ANDERSONVILLE

In August, 1862, the whole country was in a blaze of excitement and enthusiasm, occasioned by a call for 300,000 volunteers. A company was being raised at Fort Dodge and vicinity, which afterwards became Company I, of the 32nd Iowa Infantry. — Among the young men who eagerly sought for a place in the ranks, was George A. Tod, son of Samuel Tod, (a promanent [*sic*] citizen of Fort Dodge,) who was a mere boy, too young to pass muster as a regular soldier, but he was admitted as a drummer boy. He was

but little more than 15, small of his age, and very young looking but a remarkably bright boy, and a great favorite.

He shared the dangers and privations of the Regiment for about a year and a half, without any serious mishap. When Sherman's expedition was undertaken to Meridian [Mississippi], February 3d, 1864, he started with his Regiment [from Vicksburg]. After the first days' march they camped near the Big Black [River]. In the morning he started on in advance of the Regiment, and getting tired carrying his heavy knapsack, he stopped occasionally to rest. He was crossing a low piece of ground, out of sight of the Regiment, when three rebels concealed in the bushes, leveled their guns upon him, and one called out

"Surrender, you d——d little Yankee. Come in here quick, you d——d little Yankee, — hurry in."

He saw no escape and threw up his hands in token of surrender. As he came near them, one called out — "I speak for that," — refering [*sic*] to a large blanket on his knapsack. Just at this time they discovered a Union soldier who had become weary and fallen behind. They soon captured him.

They then started off swiftly; threatening to shoot the last prisoner, who was not able to keep up. — George found his load was impeding his progress, and taking off his drum he threw it away, and told his captors he would carry it no farther. — They left it and hurried on to avoid our army, and at last stopped near an old corn crib that had been built in the woods away from any house. Here they thought it safe to stay long enough to search their prisoners. George had lately invested most of his pay in a six shooting revolver, and they found only $5,00 in greenbacks on him. But with the other they were more lucky, finding upon him $80,00. They then made a search of their knapsacks, taking from them everything of any value. The only thing left for George was a tin oyster can and an old blanket. One of the rebels wanted to take this blanket, but the other declared that George should have the old blanket, as they had taken the good one from him. They found some crackers and a little butter in one of the haversacks and sat down and ate them with great relish. Finding some tobacco with their last prisoner, they were going to divide it among themselves, but he begged so hard for a share that they gave him part.

Here they were joined by two more rebels, and soon after captured another boy who had given out and fallen in the rear of our army. They were then taken to a house where they found the Lieutenant who com-

manded the squad, and he had two more prisoners. Here they were placed in charge of five horsemen, who drove them on foot all night, stopping but once, long enough to feed their horses. They reached Brownsville in the morning, but were so worn out that the rebels were compelled to get a wagon to carry them in. The next day they reached Jackson. Here their guards reported to a rebel Gen. Lee [Stephen Dill Lee], who was mounted, and with his staff. — He ordered them to "Make the d——d Yankees fall in behind, and if they do not keep up, shoot them." — The boy that was last taken soon gave out and fell fainting in the road. They picked him up and took him to a house and left him.

They soon came to a Regiment of Cavalry, and as they passed, one of the officers called out to George, — "Hello, little fellow, ain't you most tired out?" and another taking pity on him, lifted him up behind him on his horse. At night they camped, but the prisoners got nothing to eat. One of the rebels gave George a small piece of a cake made of flour and water. In the morning the rebels found some flour that was likely to be captured by our army and they took what they could carry of it. George, who was always looking ahead, filled his haversack, and took some in an old bag to his comrades, who were sleeping under a tree; — but they were so exhausted that they refused to carry it. That day they came to Gen. Lee's headquarters, and he took the prisoners out one by one and questioned them very closely about the number of men Sherman had, his destination, &c., but did not get much information. That night they stopped at a plantation, and were placed in a negro hut for the night. While there, the ladies of the house came out to see the "Yankees." They seemed to take a great interest in George and asked him all sorts of questions. "How he happened to go into the army, he was so young and small," &c.

They had nothing to eat but some flour and water, which they mixed and ate half raw, at night sleeping on the ground without any blankets.

The next day they were taken to Morton and delivered to the Provost Marshal. Here George found a young Iowa soldier named Chandler, of the 4th Cavalry. [Luther P. Chandler, of Horton, corporal of Co. H, 4th Iowa Cavalry.] They were put on the cars next morning and taken to Meridian, where they were placed in a smoke house and left for the night, without anything to eat. — George took the remainder of the flour from his haversack and divided [it] among his six companions, and this was their supper. At 3 o'clock they were aroused and placed on the train again and taken to

Selma [Alabama]. As they left, the Sergeant of the rebel guard taking pity on them, gave them $10 to buy something to eat. With this they bought at a station some biscuit, at the rate of four for a dollar, and some sweet potato pies at a dollar apiece. At Selma they were placed in a guard house with a large number of prisoners who had escaped from Cahawba [Cahaba, Alabama] prison and been re-captured. One of them, Lieut. ———, of the 4th Wisconsin Cavalry, had escaped seven times, and was heavily ironed. Here they gave the prisoners four crackers and a very small piece of meat for a days ration.

From here they were all taken on a steamer to Cahawba prison. This prison was a large building, partly enclosed, and surrounded with a stockade made by placing large posts firmly in the ground. There were about 300 hundred [*sic*] persons in this prison, and they were divided into three companies, numbered A, B, and C. The prisoners slept on the floor, with the exception of a few who had old quilts that the citizens had given them. The days' rations consisted of one quart of corn meal, and sometimes a piece of meat about two inches square. Once in ten days they receive[d] each a pint of black, dirty-looking beans, which were called "cow peas." They occasionally got a spoonful of salt each.

On the east side and 70 feet from the prison, was a steep bank of the Alabama river. The prisoners undertook the job of tunneling through from the prison floor for the purpose of making their escape. There was a raised floor in one corner of the prison, and through this they cut a hole sufficient to admit a man's body, and concealed it by setting a barrel over it. Here the men took turns working day after day, concealing the dirt under the floor. At last they came to the bank of the river, and to avoid discovery left that end of the tunnel filled. The night came for the attempted escape, and the men crowded into the tunnel one by one, and communicated to those in the prison by passing the word from one to the other. The one in advance punched a small hole thro' the crust at the bank, but thought it too light yet, and requested them to wait until it got darker. As the word was passed back, those in the prison misunderstood it and thought the attempt was to be abandoned for the night. So they returned to their quarters and went to sleep. — Those in the tunnel waited a while, and the advance guard at last pushed the dirt away from the mouth of the hole and crawled out, followed by 7 officers and 5 privates. They managed to cross the river and struck into the woods and traveled until they found a planter's stable. Here

they helped themselves to horses and mules and rode sixty miles before they were captured. Their comrades in the prison were very indignant in the morning when they found the officers had, as they supposed, deceived them, and only cared for themselves. The guards discovered the tunnel from the outside, and the prisoners were pursued, captured and soon brought back again.

At another time the boys cut thro' the brick wall and removed a post of the stockade and 15 of them escaped, but were finally re-captured. Some of them were concealed near town for several days and furnished with provisions by a negro. Two of the number, who had escaped several times, were now heavily ironed together by bars of iron fastened to their wrists and ankles.

One day a new guard was put on duty, who was heard to say in the morning that he would kill a Yankee before night. During the day one of the prisoners stood looking through the crack in the door, when this guard, without a word, drew up his musket and shot him dead.

At one time 25 men escaped by cutting their way out, but were hunted down by blood-hounds and all but two captured. After they were taken, the citizens formed a ring around them and prevented their escape, while they set the dogs upon them, the savage brutes mangling them in the most shocking manner. This was done as a punishment for their attempt to escape.

Rumors often reached the prisoners that they were going to be exchanged. On the 23d of April they were ordered to cook two days' rations. The next day they were taken out of prison and placed on board the steamer Reindeer. They felt in fine spirits, supposing they were about to be exchanged. Instead of that good fortune, however, they were being conveyed to Andersonville [Georgia], to undergo all the horrors of that dreadful slaughter-pen; — where instead of killing men out right without torture, they are murdered by inches; broiling in the hot sun by day, lying on the damp ground almost naked at night, drenched by heavy dews and rains, and starved, until insanity or death makes them insensible to further tortures.

They reached Andersonville on the 27th of April, 1864, and were at once turned into that horrible pen, from which there was scarcely a chance for escape from a lingering death or disease of the most loathsome kind. Anderson[ville] is an obscure Railroad station, containing but one store, a post office, and a few dwellings. The prison, or stockade, contains about

twenty acres of ground, surrounded by a wall of upright, hewn timbers set close together and firmly imbeded [*sic*] in the ground. — There is a small stream running thro' the yard, the ground being swampy near the banks, but on each side are high hills, which had been cleared of heavy timber. About 300 yards outside of the inclosure are two batteries, so stationed that the guns command the stockade. On the walls, at intervals of about 50 feet, are scaffolds erected for the guards, who occupy them constantly, well armed. At night there are guards placed at short intervals completely surrounding the stockade. Extending around on the inside, and ten feet from the walls, is the *dead-line*, marked by short posts driven into the ground and boards nailed to them. Who ever ventured outside of that line did so at the risk of having a dozzen [*sic*] balls put through him by the guards.

As the new prisoners were about to enter the gates, the officers cautioned them to secrete anything that they wished to retain, as there was a gang of desparadoes [*sic*] inside who would rob them.

An immense crowd of wretched, half starved, ragged and dirty human beings had gathered near the gates to look at the late arrivals, and watch for any friend or comrade that might happen to be among them. — George went away from the crowd and found a small, low island in the marsh. He waded through the mud and water and took his claim beside a stump and made this his home for many long, weary weeks. The new prisoners had nothing given them to eat that night, and had to lie down on the damp ground, without any kind of a shelter or even a blanket. . . .

The next morning George got his rations for the day, which consisted of nothing but a little corn meal ground with the cob, and a small piece of meat. This they must mix with a little water and cook the best way they could. No cooking utensils were furnished, and the common method was to get a good sized chip and hollow it out a little, and putting their mixture in that, would hold it up to the fire until it was partially cooked on one side, when it was turned and the other side served the same way. — Though they were in the midst of plenty of timber, the only fuel furnished them was *three sticks of cordwood to each detachment of 270 men, each day*. This the men would divide up as they could with old knives and axes which they had managed to procure from the outside at enormous prices.

George had, through all of his travels and changes, managed to keep his tin oyster can, which was now of inestimable value to cook his meal in. He chose for his messmate one of his old comrades, the man who was captured

with him, Mr. Vincent [probably Beth [*sic*] Vincent of Fort Dodge, Co. I, 32nd Iowa Infantry]. They built a sort of clay furnace and fitting the can on it, managed to cook their meal in much better shape than most of their comrades could. The stump on their claim furnished them with fuel. They cut it in small pieces with knives, and occasionally could hire the use of an old ax.

They suffered so much from the intense heat of the sun, that they went to work and dug up roots, and with the clay and pieces of roots, built a sort of shelter high enough to be able to crawl under and escape from the scorching rays of the sun.

The suffering of the men from want of sufficient food, was very great. The use of the meal alone, half cooked, gave them the scurvy, from which they were fast becoming worn out, sick and dying. Many became so weak and disheartened that they neglected to go for their rations, and the loss of a days' allowance, wretched as it was, would be very sure to so weaken the poor fellows that they would lie down on the ground and die.

One day they received a large addition to their numbers, consisting of a body of veterans who had been captured at Plymouth. These men had just drawn new clothes, been paid off, and had managed to save a large share of their money. George made an arrangement with some of them to cook their meal on shares, and in this way he saved some, and making it into little balls, he cooked and sold them at 15 cents apiece. — This enabled him to buy some salt and other necessaries. At one time he had saved 7 or 8 quarts of meal, but some one discovered it and carried it off.

At last fuel got so scarce that what he used in cooking the cakes was worth more than the cakes would sell for. George was sharp enough then to change his business. He had worked his stump all up and even dug out all of the roots, cut them up, dried and used them. He then formed a partnership with two Illinois boys, and they found some more stumps, *rented* an old ax and went into the fuel trade. The two stronger boys worked up the stumps so that George could handle the pieces, and he, with his knife, cut them up into small sticks about six inches long, and sold little bundles of them at 30 cents each.

About this time some of the prisoners had dug a tunnel under the stockade and had laid their plans for escape. George was employed to cook up some cakes for them. Owing to some cause only two succeeded in getting through the tunnel, and they were captured the next day.

Their sufferings increased as fuel became more difficult to obtain, and hundreds sickened and died from eating, day after day, nothing but half raw meal. Those who were helpless and lying in the scorching sun, were sometimes carried up to the surgeon's by their comrades — he would prescribe, but had no medicine for them, and they could not obtain it. The only medicine they could obtain for the scurvy, was sumac berries, which being sour would afford a slight relief. Those of the prisoners who had no friends, were left to their fate when taken sick. — They would lie down under the hot sun and before they died the flies would blow them and the worms could be seen working in the festering bodies.

From the 1st to the 27th of June, it rained almost continually; the nights being quite cold, the men without shelters lying in the mud and rain, suffered terribly.

Among the prisoners were a large number of bounty jumpers who had deserted to the rebels. They banded together and hesitated not to rob, and even to murder their fellow prisoners for the blankets, clothing or money some might have. The bodies of murdered men were found concealed by these desperadoes. At last the prisoners organized a sort of police, for the purpose of hunting these wretches down and putting a stop to their crimes. On the 30th of June the guards and police began the work, and by the close of the following day they had captured 15 of the leaders of the gang. They organized a court, the witnesses and jury being composed of our men. — Those who had only been guilty of stealing, were sentenced to run the gauntlet, while the leaders and more desperate ones who had been concerned in the murders, were sentenced to be hung. The gallows were erected inside of the stockade, and six of the gang were taken out and hung by the prisoners. Most of the convicts were from New York. One of them named Curtiss broke his rope and fell to the ground — he declared he was innocent, and begged hard to be released, but he was lifted upon the scaffold and swung off again.

On the 24th of July they were told by the officers of the guard that they would be allowed to get up a petition, setting forth the horrors of their situation, and asking our Government to permit them to be exchanged. They were promised that it should be forwarded to our Government. They did so, but never knew what disposition was made of it.

The water now became so bad that the men began to dig wells. — In one of these they started a tunnel and dug it out under the stockade, large

enough for two men to go through; but it was discovered and the escape prevented.

On the 26th, two wagons came in loaded with wood. After the wood had been thrown out of the first one, George slyly crept into it and laid down in the large box. The driver, who was riding one of the mules, did not see him and drove out. As they passed through the gate, the watchman happened to be looking another way, and George passed safely out. There were a large number of prisoners at work on the outside cutting and drawing wood, and doing all kinds of work. George slipped quietly out of the wagon, and without looking back started straight for the cook-house, where a number of the prisoners on parole were employed. He escaped detection and passed for one of the workmen. The boys divided their rations with him, and he began to cook up some cakes for use on the journey which he had in contemplation. He had decided to try to find his way to Pensacola, which was occupied by our troops. He though it would be less difficult than to evade the rebel scouts, who were hovering around, watching Sherman's advance.

George started on the night of the 2d of August, and succeeded in getting through the lines. It had been raining and was a very dark night. — George traveled until about midnight, when he came to a swamp where the water was too deep to cross. He explored in every direction, and found that the swamp extended on three sides of him, and that the only dry land was in the direction that he came in. He waded out into the mud and water, but heard the frogs croaking way ahead and finally concluded to wait until daylight. In the morning he found a road and bridge and crossed over.

He kept in the woods a long time, and at last came to a clearing. He found an old cabin, and near it was a peach tree. He gathered some peaches and went into the deserted cabin to eat them. He soon heard some one at the peach tree, and looking through a crevice saw a negro. The negro came soon and looked into the house and saw him. George thought it was best to make a friend of him, so he called him in. The negro told him that his master was coming along soon with a team. — George told him that he was an escaped prisoner, and begged him not to betray him to his master. He proved true, for when his master came along he met him some distance off and went on with him. — George learned from the negro that he was only *five miles* from Andersonville.

That night he traveled until near daylight, when it began to rain and he

made a bed of leaves and laid down and rested through the day. — He had about three days' rations with him, and found some apples and peaches which made very good fare, compared with prison rations. The next day as he was following an obscure road, he came almost into the streets of a town, before he saw it. He turned towards the nearest woods and managed to elude observation. He waited until night and then started on again. The next morning he came upon some negroes working in the woods. They did not see him, but he stood and watched them, feeling that they were friends. Soon one faithful look[ing] fellow left the rest, and George went up to him and asked him about the roads, direction, &c. He told the negro that he had escaped from the stockade. The negro told him that his master was a Union man. — When the negro came from his dinner he brought George a jug of milk, a large watermelon, some peaches and apples. At night the negroes came and brought him bread and cakes, and seemed anxious to help him all they could.

One day he came across a young negro, and in the course of the conversation he told the negro how the war began, and he seemed highly interested. He went back to where his mother was cooking for the field hands. The old negro woman soon came, bringing a good supply of corn bread and meat, also several negroes with her. They wanted to hear about the war and how George got away. The old woman said "You needn't be afraid the niggas about here'll tell on you, bless your little soul, we is all glad you got away."

On the evening of the 10th of August, George was traveling along and suddenly came upon a rebel soldier who was home on furlough. — He saw by the blue clothes that George was a Yankee. He said he did not expect to have a Yankee to supper that night, but told George to come in and get something to eat. He questioned George about the war, &c., and asked him what he enlisted for. At night he gave him a blanket to sleep on, and he and two negroes sat up to watch George that he did not escape. The woman of the house gave George a quilt.

Soon after, the jailor came, who had been sent for by the rebel soldier, to take charge of George. The jailor took him to his house, and his wife seeing that his coat, pants and shirt were in rags, gave him a shirt and pair of stockings. The jailor then took him in a carriage to the little town of Lumpkinville. On the way he showed his "little Yankee," as he called him, to everyone on the road, and he appeared to be as much of a curiosity as some wild beast. — They stopped at one place where there was a woman and two

girls. The woman seeing his clothes so ragged gave him a coat and pair of pants. The girls got a basket of peaches for him and were all very kind. The old lady said all she asked of him was, "That if he ever met her sons in battle that he would not shoot them."

They stopped at a school house and the jailor called the children to come and see the Yankee. The children could hardly be made to believe that the harmless looking little fellow sitting in the carriage, was a "real live Yankee."

At last they came to the town, and the jailor delivered George to a military man who was there. The people soon learned that there was a Yankee in town, and they began to flock around from every direction. The little boys would stand on the outside of the crowd, out of danger as they thought, and try to get a sight of the terrible Yankee. They were very anxious to know if George was as large as the ordinary Yankee soldiers. The ladies of the town could restrain their curiosity no longer, and sent down to the officer to bring his Yankee up where they could see him. So they went up and George was exhibited to the rebel ladies, who asked him all sorts of questions. They seemed to think George was not a very dangerous looking fellow, if he was a Yankee.

He was then placed in charge of two soldiers who were going to Hood's army. They took him in the stage and arrived at Cuthbert about midnight, when they put him in the lock-up, where he was left with a negro until morning, when he was placed on the cars and sent to Andersonville.

He was here placed in a small stockade used as a guard house, where he was left for two weeks. While here he had plenty to eat, and fared quite well. On the 26th he was taken before the Provost Marshal, who tried to find out who gave him the citizen's clothes which he wore. But George refused to tell, knowing that the woman who gave them to him would be severely punished if found out. He was then taken before the commander of the post who told him he did not know whether it was best to shoot him or put him back in the stockade. George told him he had rather he would shoot him. — He finally concluded to send George to the hospital.

On the 9th of September a number of the prisoners were taken out and started for Savannah. George was among the number. When they arrived at Savannah they were put in the jail over night and the next day were taken to Charleston. When they got there they were herded like so many cattle in some yards near the depot, with guards stationed around them.

In the morning they were taken to the outskirts of the city and guarded on a race track by stationing guards close around them. George being dressed in citizen's clothes, watched his chance, slipped between the guards and walked off without being observed. He had ten cents and a gutta-percha ring, with which he managed to get some bread and sweet potatoes. At night he slept in lumber yards, and wherever he could secrete himself. Getting short of rations, he went down town one day where some buildings were burning, set on fire by shells from our fleet. — He went into a number of houses and helped carry out the goods, keeping a sharp lookout for something to eat. Not finding any provisions in any of the burning buildings, he ventured into one that "looked as though [it] might soon take fire." By searching around he found a loaf of bread, a cheese, some sweet-potatoes and an orange, which he appropriated and left the burning buildings to others more interested in saving rebel property.

One morning after George had passed the night in an old hovel, a man came along and found him there and began to question him about where he lived, &c., thinking at last that he was a deserter from the rebel army. He told George that he would protect him, and invited him to his home. This man, whose name was Hogan, an Irishman, proved to be a Union man. George staid [*sic*] with Mr. Hogan about ten days and then got work at a livery stable.

On the 6th of October George was attacked with the yellow fever, and was sent to the citizens' hospital. He remained very sick for about three weeks.

After leaving the hospital he was employed by a Mr. Hunt, who kept a warehouse. He sold grain and provisions at the following rates: — Corn, $27 per bushel; Peas, $27 per bushel; Flour, $150 a sack. Beef was selling at from $4 to $5 per pound. Four Turnips were sold for one dollar. Good apples, a dollar each. Oranges from one to three dollars each. Potatoes sold for one dollar and a half per quart. Clothing sold at rather high rates: A common wool hat sold for from $40 to $50. Shoes, $150 a pair. Good boots, $300 a pair. Cotton handkerchief, $10.

December the 13th, George learned that some of the prisoners were about to be exchanged, and determined to try to get in with them. — When he left in the morning Mr. Hunt gave him ten dollars.

When the prisoners were about being taken out to the fleet to be exchanged, George slipped by the guards and got in among the prisoners,

passed on to the rebel boat and from there was transported with the other prisoners to a boat sent from our fleet to receive them. When the prisoners reached our boat, they were provided with a new suit of clothes, cups, coffee, crackers, meat, and onions. On the morning of the 14th of December they were transferred to a steamer and started for the North. As the steamer with the prisoners passed the monitors, gunboats and transports the soldiers and sailors gave them some tremendous cheers.

On the 16th they arrived at Annapolis, Md. Here the men were taken to a bath house, and after a thorough washing were furnished with new suits throughout, paid two months' wages, and in addition were paid for the rations they should have had while starving in the rebel prison. The men then received furloughs for thirty days and left for their various homes.

George arrived at his home in Fort Dodge on the 31st of December, after passing safely through sufferings such as thousands of stout men died under. His parents had not heard a word from him from the time he was captured until he arrived at Annapolis, when he sent a short letter, announcing his safe return. George leaves for the army again in a few days, to serve out the remainder of his term of enlistment.