

IOWA TROOPS IN DAKOTA TERRITORY,  
1861-1864

BASED ON THE DIARIES AND LETTERS OF  
HENRY J. WIENEKE

*Edited by Mildred Throne\**

A phase of the Civil War which received little notice at the time, or since, was that of the frontier posts of the western territories. There a handful of soldiers dragged out a weary existence, enlivened only now and then by brushes with the Indians, while they counted the days until their enlistments would be over and read with envy the exploits of their friends and neighbors fighting the "rebels" in the South. The regular army troops stationed at the frontier posts to protect settlers against Indian raids were needed in the eastern theater of the war; therefore, companies of the newly recruited volunteers from the states closest to the frontier were sent west to relieve them. The first Iowa troops sent to Dakota Territory were Companies A, B, and C of the 14th Iowa Infantry, mustered in at Iowa City on October 23 to 25, 1861. They left Iowa City on November 2 for Fort Randall, Dakota Territory.<sup>1</sup>

In September of 1862 these three companies, numbering 267 men, were detached from the 14th and designated the 41st Iowa Infantry Battalion; still later (April, 1863) they were transferred to the 7th Iowa Cavalry as Companies K, L, and M. Another Iowa cavalry regiment, the 6th, also served in Dakota, arriving there in the spring of 1863.<sup>2</sup>

Fort Randall, one of several military posts in Dakota Territory was located on the Missouri River near what is now the border between Nebraska and South Dakota. The site had been selected in 1856 by Major General William S. Harney, who had been conducting an expedition against the Sioux. In 1861 five companies of the Fourth Artillery were stationed at Randall; in May, three companies were sent east, while two remained in

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<sup>1</sup>*Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion . . .* (6 vols., Des Moines, 1908-1911), 2:721. (Hereafter cited as *Roster and Record*.)

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:1115, 1253; 5:1159-60.

Tuesday Sept. 27th 64 . . . news from the Fisk Expedition arrived this P M they are on their way back were only 70 miles from here yesterday Morn when the Messengers left them. . . .

Sat Oct 1st started at sun rise marched 4 miles to Beaver Cr where we stopped to get up wood for our nights supply started on and traveled to our old Camp No 20 on Blue blanket creek got in here at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  oclock so dark that we could not see the Company in advance of ours. Capt. Stivers Co was sent out to the Goose Lake to get some Indians that were there He brought eight of them in and Genl made a treaty with them they are Two Bear and his camp and Band consisting of 60 or 70 lodges they say they are going to Red river of the N[orth]. . . .

Thursday 13th Oct 1864 arrived at Ft Randall or at the Boat landing weather has been fine wind blowing hard today

Thursday Oct 20 arrived at and crossed the big Sioux river Yester Eve Genl sent orders for us to recross this Morn which we did in a very respectable snowstorm we moved about 2 miles down the river to the lower ferry landing and Encamped in the wood Stormy all day Colonel pattee and the men on the Boats all came over to Camp today

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[Here the Wieneke diary ends. On November 9, 1864, the following notice appeared in the *Iowa City Republican*.]

RETURN OF SOLDIERS — Some thirty of our soldiers from Ft. Randall who have served out their full term of three years, have been discharged and returned home, most of them in time to vote last Tuesday. They have had hard service and but little chance to win glory. But they are welcome home and are entitled to the thanks of their countrymen for their long service.

their increased self-confidence would spoil Sully's plans for peace treaties with them. However, he sent Col. Dill with 300 of the 30th Wisconsin, 200 of the 8th Minnesota, and 100 of the 7th Iowa Cavalry to Fisk's rescue. On reaching the besieged train, Dill found that the Indians had withdrawn and that Fisk was trying to get the train to proceed into the Bad Lands where, strung out in the hills and gorges, they would have been an easy prey for the waiting Indians. Dill insisted that the train return to Fort Rice with him; after some arguing, Fisk gave in and accompanied the train back to the safety of the Fort. *Official Records*, Vol. XLI, Part I, 151-3 (Sully's report), 795-6 (Dill's report); Drips, *Three Years Among the Indians*, 97-8; "Expeditions of Capt. Jas. L. Fisk to the Gold Mines of Idaho and Montana, 1864-1866," *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota*, 2:421-42 (1908).