

The Palimpsest

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Shelby Norman

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Cover: The likeness of Shelby Norman on the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Des Moines. For a searching look at Norman's claim as Iowa's first fatal Civil War casualty, see p. 174. (photo by John Schultz)



The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

The Adventures of the Nineteenth Iowa

by

Donald M. Anderson

Two people in the Madison, Wisconsin area have an interest in a remote Civil War encounter, the battle of Sterling Farm, Louisiana.

It is Tuesday, 2:00 p.m. and Mrs. Dennis Martens is busy taking an X-ray of the writer's left upper molars. "It must be nice to live in the country," Mrs. Martens says. "My neighbor, Rose Evans, suggests that I go out and see the wild crocus on the hills around Springfield Corner." Wild crocus? Those are Pasque flowers. Now the X-rayed suspects that Mrs. Martens is not native to these parts. Where, then? Iowa. The victim's family had roots there. Where in Iowa? A farm near Washington. Aha, here are two strangers with ancestors on farms near Washington, Iowa. How far can we go with this nonsense?

Did Mrs. Martens have an ancestor in the Civil War? Oh yes, he was captured and escaped. This is crazy. Mrs. Martens' great-grandfather and my grandfather were in the same infantry regiment and had been captured at the same place. I told Mrs. Martens of the fact and asked her to let go of my teeth so that I could go home and confirm it. What was the fellow's name? Cocklin.

Until a few weeks before I had not known where Grandfather James Sturges Anderson had been captured, but a private in Company C, Nineteenth Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment, J. Irvine

Dungan, after the Nineteenth's dispersal from Davenport July 31, 1865, hurried home to write (in two months' time) a history of this regiment. Knowing that he would write the story of the Nineteenth Iowa, Dungan had saved newspaper accounts, interviewed successful escape artists, and afterward he went to Wapello to get a physician's diary.

The question was, did Dungan have the story of Cocklin's escape? First I had to get Dungan's story away from a high school ballad singer to whom I had lent my copy. When every moment counted there was a half-hour's delay as the girl's mother inflicted some hospitality on me. Good wine, though. Speeding home, I went upstairs and looked at Dungan's history. He had interviewed Cocklin, and the story of Cocklin's escape comprised Chapter Ten, worth 15 pages. Mrs. Martens' ancestor, Levi B. Cocklin, was some man. I called her.

The Nineteenth Regiment Iowa Volunteer Infantry was organized after Lincoln's call for 300,000 men early in July 1862 and was mustered in at Keokuk between the days of August 17 and August 23. All three soldiers mentioned were in Company C, enrolled in Washington. Author Dungan enlisted on July 22, Cocklin on August 9, and Anderson on August 14. On September 3, the Nine-



(From Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Famous Leaders and Battle Scenes of the Civil War*, 327)

teenth Iowa went to St. Louis by boat and some of them marched out to Benton Barracks. Others rode the streetcar.

On September 11, the regiment left St. Louis by rail for Rolla, Missouri, and on September 16, the Nineteenth started a "toilsome" march of 125 miles to Springfield. On October 17, the Nineteenth Iowa began a fantastic series of marches in and around the Boston mountains in Missouri and Arkansas. Once the regiment travelled 100 miles in three days and three nights, pushing artillery pieces up the hills and running with packs and rifles. This prelude to the battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas is taken from official

records in Des Moines, rather than from Dungan's book:

On the 3rd of December at 2:00 p.m., broke camp and started to reinforce the First Division under General Blunt, who was holding the enemy in check at Cane Hill, Ark.; marched 18 miles to Cane Creek and bivouacked for the night. December 5th, marched 24 miles to Pea Ridge, Ark. December 6th, marched 34 miles to Fayetteville and rested a few hours. Left Fayetteville at 5 a.m. December 7th, marched 12 miles to Illinois Creek. The Nineteenth Regiment was ordered into line of battle at 12 o'clock p.m. Here we met the enemy, under General Hindman, and fought the battle of Prairie Grove.

The battle lasted for several hours,

and in this encounter the Wisconsin Twentieth, a twin to Iowa's Nineteenth, had a rough time and the Nineteenth Iowa had to pick them up. The Wisconsin colors were in the mud, the bearer having been shot, but the Iowa men caught up the flag before the Confederates could get it. The Iowa Nineteenth lost 45 men killed at Prairie Grove. Ordered out at dawn of the next morning, the Nineteenth went looking for its enemy, but he was gone. Here the Iowa farm boys paused to bury their own and the Confederate dead. Dungan said it was not an easy thing to do with Southern women looking for their men.

The regiment went on to participate in other ventures, among them Vicksburg. Arriving at Young's Point June 10, 1863, the Iowa troops were put in line on Grant's extreme left. After Vicksburg, Grant's army was raided by his superiors, and the Nineteenth Iowa regiment was conveyed south down the Mississippi to become part of an expedition into Texas.

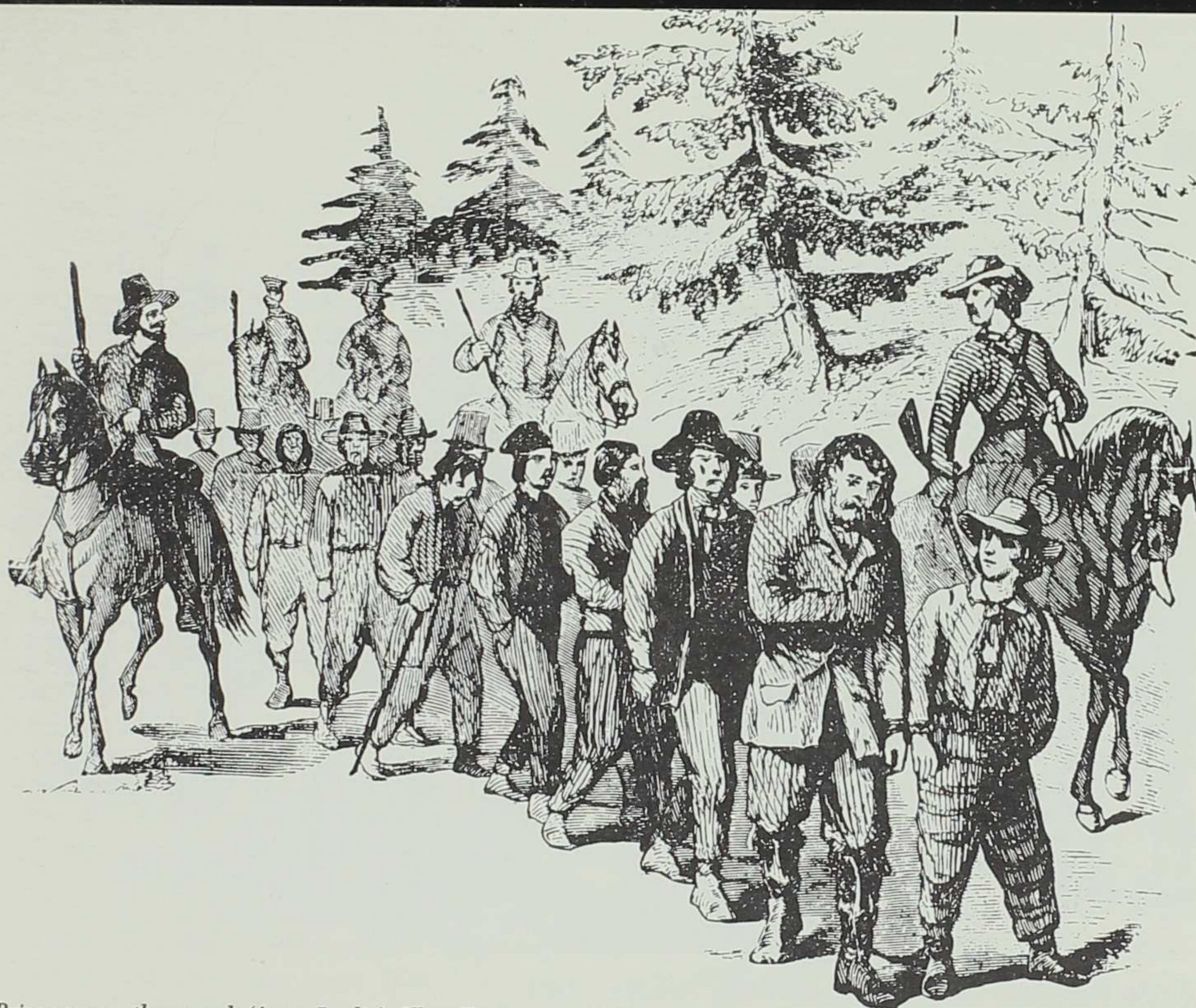
The Nineteenth regiment arrived at Port Hudson, Louisiana on July 26, 1863. Many men were sick in that camp, and when the regiment made its next move it had less than a third of its roster available. On September 5, there was an expedition to the mouth of the Red River, and the Nineteenth arrived at Morganza on September 7. The enemy was 12 miles away on the west side of the Atchafalaya River. On September 28, 260 men of the Nineteenth and about 240 men from the Twenty-sixth Indiana Infantry found themselves at Sterling Farm, acting as a screen for the Second Division. Dungan said the Federal position was bad and that General Herron, the Federal commander, had been told

so. Dungan reported that Sterling Farm was vulnerable on two sides--a private second-guessing a major general. Dungan's view was this: if this position is so good, why are so many Confederates wandering around the Federal rear?

General Green, the Confederate divisional commander, then took matters into his own hands. Detaching three brigades (5,000 men) he led an attack on the Federal force. Dungan tells how it started:

The morning of the 29th of September was rainy and disagreeable. Near half past eleven, as we were preparing dinner, a shot was heard at the picket post north of camp, then three or four shots in quick succession, all from our one picket post, then a few shots from the cane beyond, the bullets whistling through our quarters. Col. Leake of the Wisconsin 20th, hastily belting on his sword, ordered his Adjutant General to have the artillery placed inside the gap, and to open across the canefield, then ran out to where the Nineteenth was in line awaiting orders, and commanded the line himself, to 'About face! Advance to the fence and commence firing!' which was done at once, the regiment having been in line sooner after the first shot had been fired, than these lines could be written.

The adjutant never got the artillery pieces into place and Col. Leake, after putting the Indiana Twenty-sixth into line, found men dragging the guns back of the Sterling Farm house. Scrambling, the Nineteenth could not protect all of the entries to Sterling Farm, leaving the center open. Cavalry appeared. Col. Leake's adjutant said they were Federal. Too late, the Iowa soldiers recognized the Confederate carbine. Exhausted, the Federals could not stop this move, and the Confederate soldiers, surrounding the Federal force from the rear, walked



Prisoners on the march (from Leslie's Illus. Famous..., 537).

up and took rifles away from the Northern men.

Not certain of their defeated condition, Federal men continued firing. Southern Gen. Green was furious. Riding up on his charger, Green shouted, "STOP THIS CONFOUNDED SHOOTING." It was a good thing nobody tried a potshot at Green. There might have been hell to pay. Col. Leake was lucky, if Dungan heard it right. "Col. Harrison of the rebels, said he had directed the attention of five sharp-shooters successively to Col. Leake, and after seeing their fire ineffectual, had himself drawn his never failing weapon, but at the last moment refrained from firing, he knew not why." Of course both sides were taught to shoot officers first. Col. Leake's opposite number Major Boone, for example, was savagely riddled as he came through the line, losing first his arm, then three fin-

gers from his left hand, and finally his life.

After their capture, the men of the Nineteenth were marched back through the rain and mud to a ferry and shuttled across the river. The shock of defeat and capture was made worse by a drenching rain that did not cease for 48 hours. They had no food and no shelter. The next day, after an issue of raw meat but no cooking pots, the march began--it went on for 21 days until the prisoners reached Alexandria. There they were shut up (all 500 of them) in a room 24 by 36 feet. Then on to Shreveport. The men were half starved; they bartered away any remaining possessions to hucksters that offered bread, cakes, pies, and apples. Already their condition was going downhill rapidly, but worse was to come. As Dungan wrote, instead of parole, "...we were turned toward Texas, and the middle of



A Civil War prison camp (from Leslie's Illus. Famous..., 187).

October we were at Tyler, in a pen on a hillside with the great pine woods around us, and no shelter or means of making one over us. Lying out long cold nights, thinking of home, rain falling upon us frequently, these things begat thoughts of escape and many let their thoughts mature into plans and executed their plans."

Dungan, Horatio W. Anderson, and William McGregor, all from Company C, broke out of the Tyler pen on November 8, hoping to reach Fort Smith, Arkansas far to the north. With scant provisions the three ran, taking direction from the stars. Starving most of the time, Dungan and his two comrades used every trick to get back to Union lines.

The trio found an abandoned farmhouse and took temporary possession. After the scant prison fare the feast of fried pork and honey from a fat hog and

beehive found at the farm must have seemed like heaven. They put a feather bed down by the fire and slept soundly until three in the morning. Dungan borrowed paper and pen from McGregor and scribbled a bogus pass, forging the name of Gen. Steele, C.S.A. Armed with the flimsy paper, the men struck out again, and soon crossed over the Arkansas line, travelling rapidly from there along a state road.

The pass that Dungan had made worked once. Dungan's group got mixed up with all manner of people. In one friendly farmhouse they were surrounded by some armed bushwhackers. None too bright, it seems:

They entered the house, sitting around on chairs, beds and tables promiscuously, with shotguns and squirrel rifles. We could hear their rough talk from the kitchen and trembled at our probable fate but the crisis had to come, so putting on an unconscious

look, we arose from the table and entered the room. To meet the curious gaze of ten or twelve pair of eyes peering from out hairy faces of roughly dressed men, without flinching or changing color, was the task successfully accomplished. When one at last ventured to ask us who we were I, as spokesman, answered we were paroled Federal prisoners sent through to our lines by Gen. Steele, whose army lay in or near that part of the country we had passed over. Then one of them who plainly prided himself on his shrewdness and knowledge of business said, 'You'd orter hev a showin or paper.' 'Certainly' said I, drawing forth the pass and handing it to him. He took the slip of paper gingerly betwixt his thumb and forefinger, using it as though momentarily looking for it to evaporate, and turning to a small-eyed red headed man said, 'Judge, you're more on a skollard than we, read this,' and judge accordingly read it aloud pronouncing it 'all squar' which verdict being echoed by the others a mountain lifted itself from my heart. Not to seem hurried, we sat a half hour, promising to 'jog along a bit further fore night,' which promise we conscientiously kept.

This was a matter of luck. Had the Dungan threesome run into a Confederate officer, they probably would have been laughed into the nearest jail. Dungan listed himself as a student and one can guess he got his kicks out of this kind of mad caper. They tried it again and just missed, within a few miles of Federal picket posts:

The people received us kindly; we told them who we were and they got us something to eat, while sitting by the fire talking over the war, the clatter of iron hoofs was heard and in a minute the two doors were opened at once admitting three roughly clad brutal looking men each with a drawn revolver. Of course we surrendered, and were at once subjected to a searching ordeal of questions to determine if we were all right but with the aid of our forged pass we satisfied all of the party but one who knew too much, and he had us taken back

six miles to a house to find their Captain to see what disposition to make of us. During that midnight tramp, *Cook* several times promised us he would see to it that our blood and bones 'enriched Arkansas soil.

The recapture went hard. They were marched 70 miles in the next two days along muddy roads, finally to be lodged in the second story room of a county jail --along with 60 other men, some of them in the same room for months without a change of clothes or a bath. All kinds of miscreants were there: horse thieves, Union sympathizers, deserters, murderers, river boat gamblers, and any other sort of riff-raff. The conditions were so bad, Dungan and the others tried to escape again, dropping out of a jail window and fleeing for the woods with patrols everywhere in the streets. Fortune was not with them. Caught once more, Dungan was strung up by a rope and handcuffs and then beaten by a Confederate colonel who said, "That's the way we break our niggers, and that's the way we'll break all such damned nigger loving _____."

If Dungan's attempts were reckless at times, Cocklin and his friends went over the Shreveport wall with plenty of experience. Cocklin was a sergeant and went out with John Cary of the Ninety-fourth Illinois Infantry and L. Stone Hall of Company C of the Iowa Nineteenth. Cary was accustomed to frontier life and he was their guide. Cocklin and Lub Hall were to procure food. Comrades in Shreveport put in their rations until Cocklin, Cary, and Hall had a five-day food supply. "Many more would have attempted to escape if they had had clothes and shoes," wrote Dungan.

Soon, the five-day ration was gone

and the three men were desperate. "Over twenty-four hours we laid in the water, there not being a dry thread on us. Truly I believe that we suffered more during that time than we would, had the weather been cold enough to freeze us to death." Now there was a new anxiety, starvation. The three decided that it was imperative that food be obtained at the next farmhouse and Cocklin was chosen to make the attempt. He was let into the house where he found a farmer, his wife and, in the front parlor, a Confederate Captain! Cocklin started this man off with the truth, explaining that he had jumped the Shreveport pen. The officer said, "It is my duty to arrest you." Cocklin replied that the officer just might have some trouble in getting that done.

This was the prelude to a one-act drama. Cocklin knew that the Confederate officer would not kill him in cold blood, and the Confederate officer knew that he could not get Cocklin out of the house. Cocklin's ploy would not have worked on a backwoods bushwhacker but now the Confederate officer, in effect disarmed, began to talk and in a verbal battle lasting two hours Cocklin slowly turned his man around. "Do unto others as you would have done to you," said Cocklin, and the Southerner, having no answer, told Cocklin he was free to go.

The farmer could give Cocklin no food. He explained to Cocklin that such an act would put two lives in jeopardy. The captain denied this but the man would not act. The farm woman solved the dilemma by meeting Cocklin at the door with a dish of cornbread, meat and gravy, and a bottle of syrup. She knew the Confederate captain would not turn her in. She wished Cocklin well, and

the officer appeared at the door saying, "Federal, I advise you as a friend to avoid all roads for we have scouting parties out all the time." The captain's vulnerability seemed to lie in his membership in the human race.

The trio went on and on, having a frightful time crossing the great swamps and rivers. The waters were cold. At one farmhouse Cocklin lifted 12 ears of corn and the party lived on these for seven days until Cary killed a duck. It was skinned and eaten raw, "Without salt," Cary mourned. They were very nearly done. Hall was getting spells of blindness and could scarcely walk. Cocklin, without any sensation in his legs, felt his mind creeping off in escape. They finally went to the nearest farmhouse. Lub Hall went in first and then the other two. They were getting warm at the fire when the man of the house entered and told them to leave by the back door as a Rebel force was about to enter through the front door. The three were taken to Negro quarters and given supper.

After this close call they reached the Mississippi above Morganza. Cary hailed a Federal gunboat with his shirt on a pole, and they were ushered on board March 16. On March 26, Lee Cocklin was in New Orleans writing his account of the escape to his wife Eva back in Washington County. Cocklin and Hall rejoined the Nineteenth regiment and Company C in Brownsville. On May 3 Cocklin was promoted to lieutenant. Loveridge (Lub) Hall was made corporal. John Cary's luck goes unrecorded here, since he was in an Illinois regiment.

Back in the desolate Tyler stockade the prisoners of the Nineteenth never recovered from a bad start. In the

first 48 hours at Tyler the prisoners had no shelter of any kind and no food. "Then they received ten days' rations of cornmeal, but nothing to put it in, and for over thirty days had no vessels in which to cook the meal furnished them except what they could borrow from their guards. The weather was cold, only a few of the men had blankets and all were poorly clad, many of them being without shoes." This from the Adjutant General's reports in Des Moines.

When the prisoners were not in Tyler they were being marched back and forth between Tyler and Shreveport four times, clocking over 800 miles in these futile trips. Each time there was a hope of being exchanged but each time the men were disappointed when plans fell through. As the weeks droned into the spring of 1864 it must have appeared to the men that they were doomed to die at Tyler. The exchange program had

been working well, but now Grant was letting the program expire. Grant figured the exchange program helped the South, which was down three to one in manpower.

Bad as conditions were, they were now to become terrifying. The incompetent Federal General Nathaniel P. Banks, in command of the Red River campaign, was beaten at Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, Louisiana early in April of 1864. Prisoners from Mansfield and other places came streaming into Tyler. Captain S. F. Roderick, Company K of the Nineteenth, was at Tyler. In an official report he wrote: "At this time the scenes of human misery and suffering are beyond my power of description, and will only be known when some abler hand than mine shall write the history of the stockade at Tyler, Texas." Dungan was that abler man. He was back in Tyler now, after the failure of his brazen es-



(From Leslie's *Illus. Famous...*, 187)

cape ventures. He describes one of the marches:

Our guard was mounted, and had only one wagon in which were their cooking utensils and a few days' rations, not any transportation for the sick or those who might give out. With brutal thrusts and blows with gun and saber the lagging ones were quickened and when an old man, gray-haired, fell fainting by the wayside, Alford kicked him prostrate and a lariat was tied around his neck and secured to the pommel of the saddle, by which they hastened on the weak old man urging him to half run when he could keep his feet and dragging him by the neck, when through exhaustion he would sink to the earth. Another, who had been sick, lying down declared his inability to go further. Alford drawing his revolver shot him, inflicting a severe, perhaps mortal wound, and annoyed at the groans of the wounded man, he forced his negro slave to get a rail and beat out his brains.

.....
Our weary waiting again ended in disappointment, for we were marched back to Tyler, where we found between four and five thousand prisoners, most of them without even huts. Men of every tribe and tongue and nation, from every State of the Union, or out, old and young, and Indians of every tribe, were assembled here; ragged many of them, while many were *not blessed with a rag*,--a blanket thrown over their shoulders protected them from the heat of mid-day and the chill dews of the night. There were men literally *swarming* with body-lice,--'greybacks'--and sick men lying on their backs in the hot sand under a burning sun, breathing out their life in all this squalor and misery.

Instead of the last kind words or prayers, fell on his ear curses and rough jests. Idiocy, and as heart-sickening as anything,

was the passive indifference with which these things came to be regarded. Men standing by laughed at some drivelling wretch praying for something to eat. When one was sick the stomach refused the coarse corn dodger, and in this way came starvation--*not* to the strong men who could have endured scanty fare, but to those who were sick and weak, --to those who would lie near the sinks day and night, their clothes stiffening with their own filth, maggots and lice crawling over them till they died.

The men of the Nineteenth Iowa finally were exchanged on July 22, 1864. At Alexandria they camped near the dam Joseph Bailey made to let Porter's boats out of the Red River. The next day the men walked around the falls and took other steamboats at the Alexandria wharf. The prisoners, free at last, floated out onto the broad waters of the Mississippi. On board the *Nebraska* the men were given hardtack and coffee. Here Dungan says, "The change was greater than ever before experienced."

On July 24, still in rags and barefoot, the exchanged soldiers were paraded in New Orleans for propaganda purposes. This was on a Sunday morning when many New Orleans citizens were either on their way to church or returning home from church. Surely many of these citizens were shocked at this dismal and bizarre charade though many believed the soldiers to have been Southern soldiers now in Union custody. At least one reporter was a witness to the pitiful march and his story appeared the next day. In part it read: "Decency forbids us to describe the utter nudity of these men, officers and soldiers. Many of them had

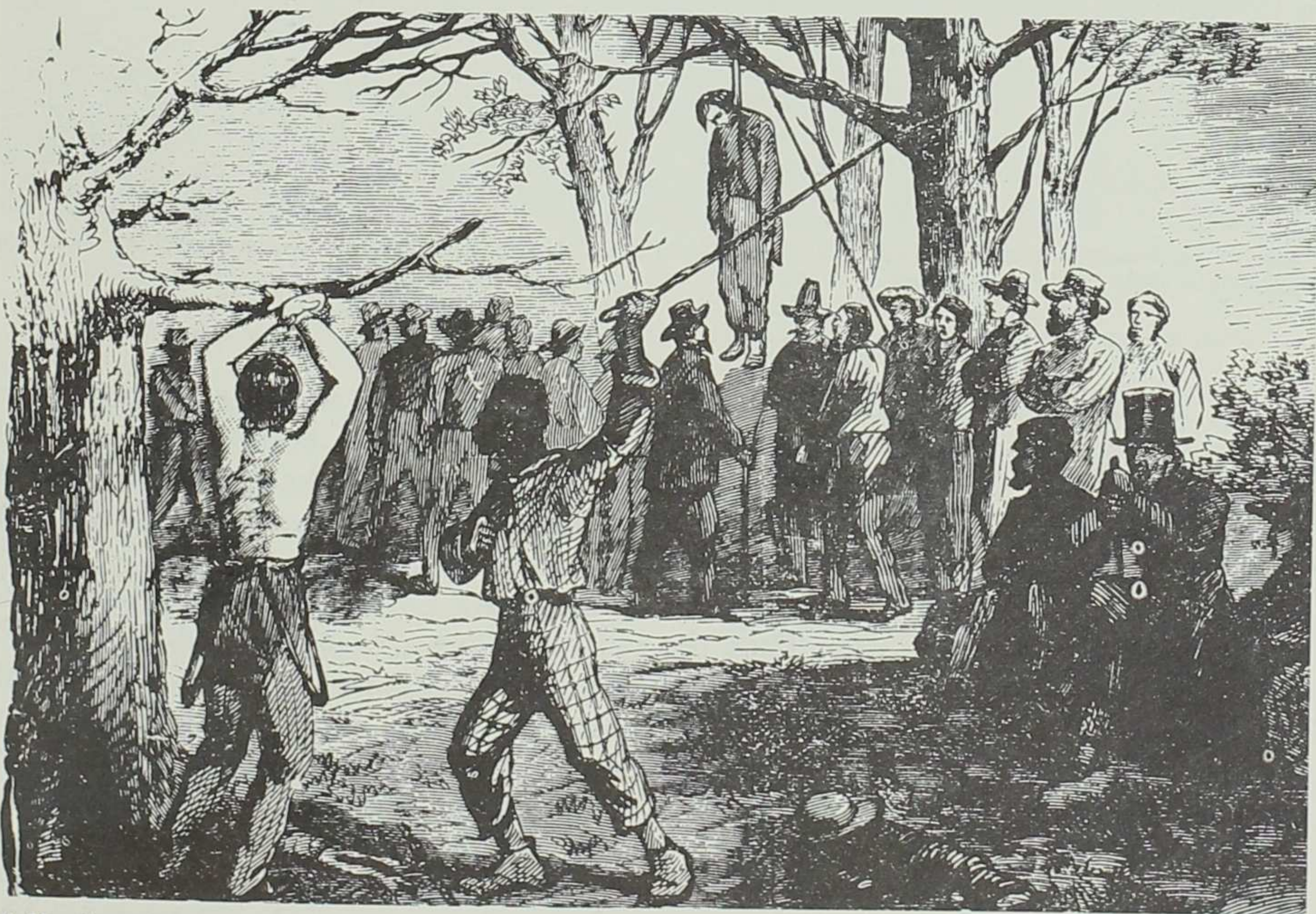
not rags to be ragged with, and as their bare feet pressed the sharp stones, the blood marked their tracks. Animated skeletons marching through the streets of New Orleans."

Perhaps this report was slightly colored by outrage, but on that same Sunday the Tyler men were lined up once more, officers seated in front, and their picture was taken. Several other pictures were taken that day showing, in fact, the troops were not very well uniformed that day. The anonymous reporter from the *New Orleans Delta* assured his

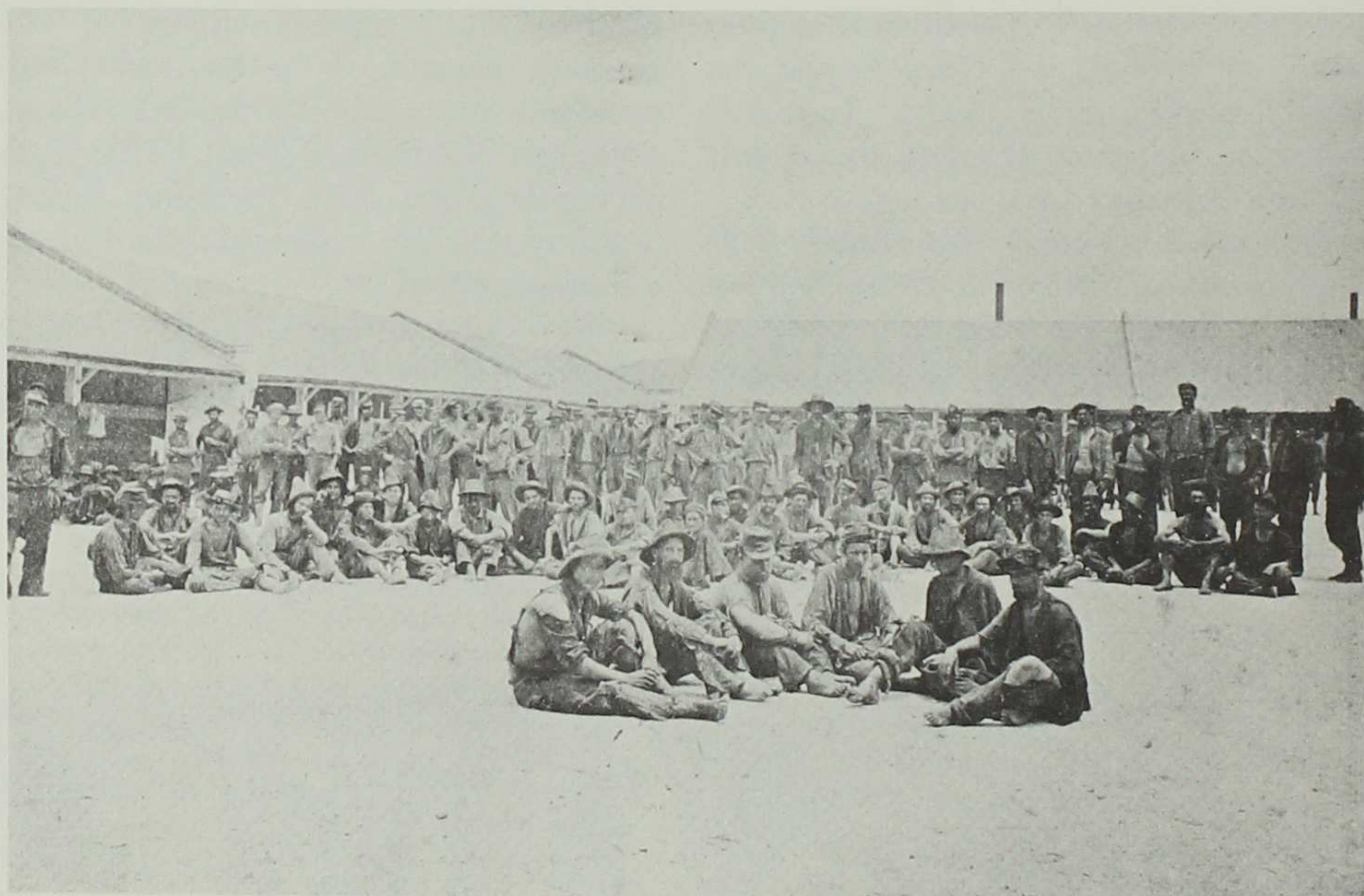
readers that "representatives of the Western Branch of the Sanitary Commission, with agents of Iowa and Indiana, addressed themselves busily to the work of ameliorating their condition. Before night they will be clad and their immediate wants cared for."

After this propaganda duty, Dungan reports that the Quartermaster did indeed issue new clothing "at once," and the Iowa and Indiana men were put into Camp Carrollton, probably without the aid of any Sanitary Commission.

Now the Nineteenth regiment was



A Northern depiction of Southern cruelty (from Leslie's *Illus. Famous...*, 537).

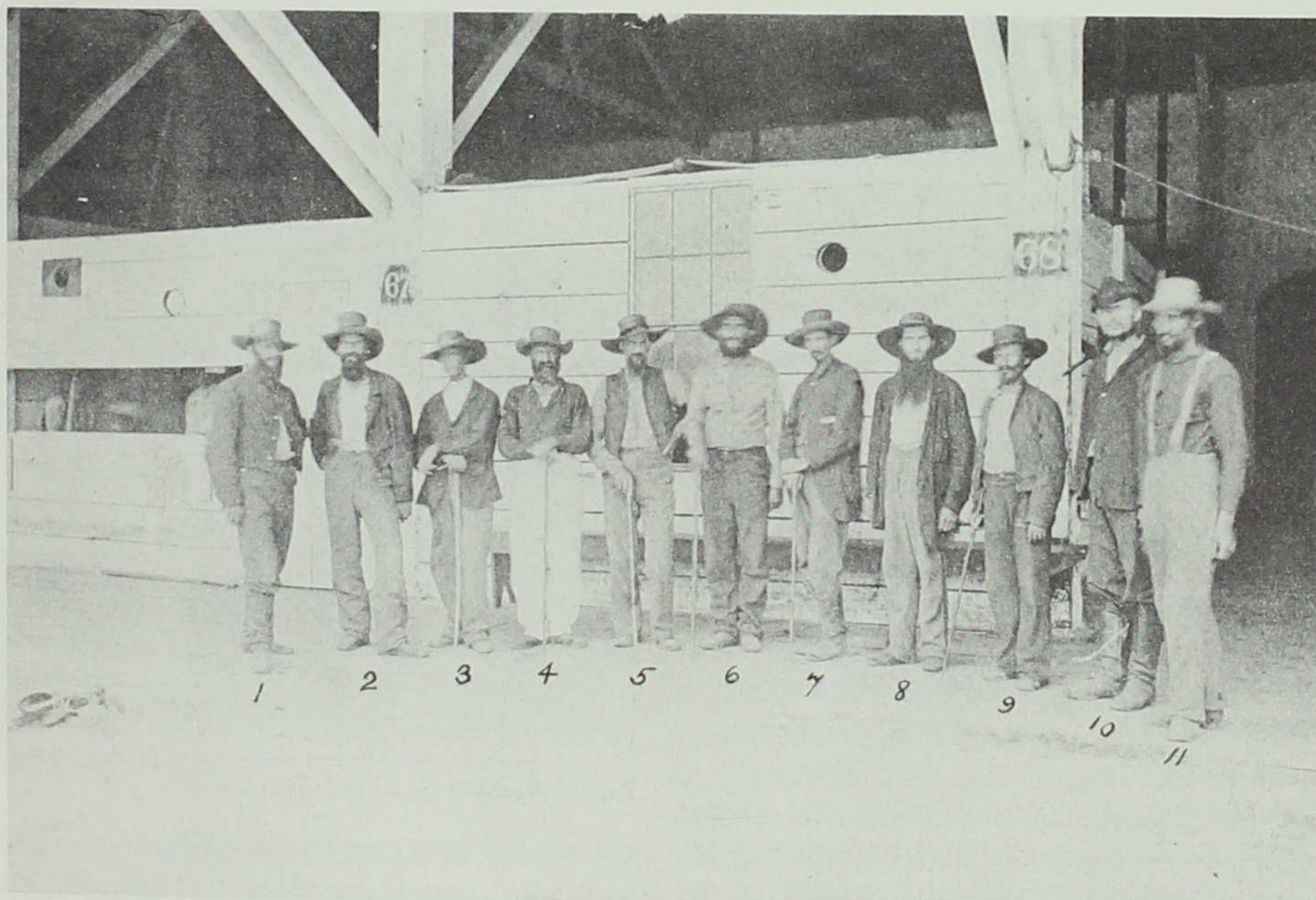


Men of the Nineteenth Iowa in New Orleans on July 24, 1864, shortly after their release from captivity (courtesy Fairfield Public Library Museum).

going home. After a brief expedition to Brownsville, the regiment had gone to Mobile, where its veterans mustered out and waited several days for a boat to New Orleans. Put aboard the dilapidated *White Cloud*, with two other regiments, things were crowded. Then the Quartermaster attempted to put a herd of horses and donkeys aboard and the troops yelled like hell. The Nineteenth regiment was removed and the animals were put aboard. Back in camp for several days the men "pondered the folly of getting in a passion." At last the men

of the Nineteenth were put on board another vessel but a boiler burst and the soldiers slept in nooks and corners of the Mobile wharves. They were finally put aboard the *Landis*.

At New Orleans the Iowa men, ex-soldiers, lost not an hour and on the *R. J. Lockwood* steamed up the Mississippi past Morganza. Here some of the men must have crowded the port side. With a better vantage point they could have seen Sterling Farm. Past Vicksburg for a last look, then into Cairo and the railroad to Davenport and a celebration with



Officers of the Nineteenth Iowa in New Orleans after repatriation. The photos of the returned prisoners were credited to McPherson & Oliver "Photographers" of No. 132 Canal St., New Orleans. Photographs of the western campaign after Vicksburg are moderately rare (courtesy the Fairfield Public Library Museum).

lots of buggies in town, the more affluent camped out in Davenport hotels. Here Lt. Col. John Bruce addressed his command for the last time on July 31, 1865.

Then James Anderson went home. Lee Cocklin went home to Eva and two little boys. Loveridge Stone Hall went home. And J. Irvine Dungan went home to write his remarkable story of the Nineteenth Iowa Infantry Regiment, which the two people in Madison, Wisconsin now share. □

Note on Sources

The primary source for this article is J. Irvine Dungan's account, *History of the Nineteenth Regiment Iowa Volunteer Infantry* (Davenport, 1865). Also helpful were *The History of Washington County* (Des Moines, 1880) and *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of Rebellion...* (Des Moines, 1910). Biographical information came from John M. Henderson, *The John McClenahan Folk* (Pittsburgh, 1912). A letter to his family from Levi Cocklin was used through the courtesy of Mrs. Dennis Martens, Madison, Wisconsin.

Iowa's First Fatal Casualty in the Civil War

by

LELAND L. SAGE



Shelby Norman (John Schultz photo)

The Soldiers and Sailors Monument, looming prominently to the southeast of the Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines, is a late-nineteenth century tribute and memorial to the Iowans who served in the Civil War -- to the survivors as well as the "martyrs" as they were called by one and all. Outstanding on the monument are representations of the four branches of the military service: the Infantry, the Cavalry, the Artillery, and the Navy. While planning the memorial, the Monument Commission heard evidence on behalf of Shelby Norman, a private in Company A, First Iowa Infantry of Muscatine (the first company to be enrolled in Iowa), as a candidate to represent the Infantry. The claim presented on behalf of young Norman, a mere "buck"

private in contrast to the officers chosen as prototypes of the other three branches of the service, rested not on any notions of serving democracy but on the contention that he was the first fatal casualty among Iowa troops in the Civil War. Just when, where, and by whom this claim was first made on Norman's behalf is impossible to say. As far back as August 29, 1882, Muscatine veterans of the War had honored Private Shelby Norman by naming their unit of the Grand Army of the Republic, Post 231, for him.

Apparently, the ladies of the auxiliary of Post 231 assisted in presenting Norman's case to the Monument Commission. Mrs. Jane E. Madden assembled a few facts about his life in his native Ohio and even tracked down a picture of Norman,

who was born and reared near Mount Sterling, Hopewell Township, in Muskingum County, Ohio. Even so, the minutes of the session of the Commission that recorded passage of a resolution giving thanks to "the ladies of Muscatine" for the donation of the picture also contained a resolution indicating some doubt of the claim: "On motion, it was decided that the portrait of Shelby Norman shall constitute one of the heroic figures of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, *in case it shall fully appear* [italics mine] that he was the first Iowa soldier to lay down his life in the late war."

Perhaps the caution of the Commission was well-founded (even though Norman was ultimately chosen as the Infantry's representative). It is the purpose of this essay to examine the evidence in favor of the claim for Shelby Norman and the claims that can be made for others as the first fatal casualty among Iowa troops in the Civil War.

The Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri (also known as the Battle of Springfield and the Battle of Oak Hills) is given as the occasion of Shelby Norman's death and August 10, 1861 as the date. This battle, one of the decisive encounters of the War if one allows that it saved Missouri for the Union, was the first full-scale, pitched battle in which Iowa troops participated. Since Private Norman was an enlistee in the first company in the first regiment to be raised in Iowa and since this was the first battle of record for this regiment, it has usually been considered impeccable logic to assume the first Iowa fatality in this engagement was the first Iowa fatality in the War.

In weighing the claims for Shelby Norman and others, several questions

arise. For example, what was the technical, military definition of a "fatal casualty" in Civil War thinking? Are we to consider only those deaths that resulted instantly, or almost instantly, after receiving an enemy bullet, or a sabre cut, or a bayonet thrust, or a shell from an unseen artillery piece? Alas, we must also consider death from disease, the most common killer of all. Typhoid fever, pneumonia, malaria, dysentery, and other ills were frequently-reported causes of death. Should one who died from disease or a service-related accident be reckoned as a "fatal casualty" as readily as one whose death came from a bullet or other means of violent death? The answer is yes -- death from any cause while on duty was an official "casualty."

The determination of a "first" in any area of history is a difficult enterprise, sometimes of limited importance, yet the question of Iowa's first fatal casualty in the Civil War, once raised and investigated, is intriguing and of some historical value. George Mills, formerly on the staff of the *Des Moines Register* and an outstanding authority on the facts of Iowa history, raised doubt about Shelby Norman's claim in 1974 in a review of my book, *A History of Iowa*. I had blandly written that "Shelby Norman...who is memorialized on the Soldiers and Sailors Monument...in Des Moines" was the first Iowan to lose his life in the Civil War. Mills questioned this assertion and, on good authority, presented the name of Private Cyrus W. West, Company H, Third Iowa Infantry, of Mahaska County, as the one who deserved this place in history.

At first glance it seemed that I had too easily accepted the claim for Shelby Norman, even though I had relied on the

authority of several distinguished writers of Iowa history. Scholars such as Mildred Throne, Associate Editor for the State Historical Society of Iowa, William J. Petersen, Superintendent of the State Historical Society, Edith W. McElroy, author of the Civil War article for the *Iowa Official Register* and also a booklet for the Iowa Civil War Centennial Commission, and even George Mills himself had one and all advanced the name of Shelby Norman, accepting the tradition without raising a question, although Mills omitted the claim when his original article later appeared as part of a book.

The first order of business was a thorough examination of the source used by Mills in his review: where, when, and on what authority had a counter claim been made? The case for Cyrus W. West was found in an inconspicuous *Palimpsest* article, which was repeated, word for word, in a later book but without citation of authority and without description of the place or circumstances of West's death. Indeed, the author, Jacob Swisher, hedged his assertion by saying West "was, therefore, *probably* [italics mine] the first Iowan to give his life for the cause of freedom in the Civil War."

Because Swisher gave no citation for the Cyrus W. West case, I have assumed for purposes of comparison of the Norman and West records that he made use of the brief entries in *The Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion*. Here are the entries in their stark, original form:

Norman, Shelly [Shelby]. Age 18. Nativity

Ohio. Enlisted April 18, 1861. Mustered May 14, 1861. [Company A, First Iowa Infantry] Killed in battle Aug. 10, 1861, Wilson's Creek, Mo.

West, Cyrus W. Age 19. Residence Mahaska County. Nativity Indiana. Enlisted June 1, 1861 [Company H, Third Iowa Infantry] Mustered June 8, 1861. Killed in action July 11, 1861, Monroe, Mo.

Although these two items are separated by many pages and are buried among thousands of similar items, the difference in dates and the priority of Private West's death apparently caught Swisher's eagle eye, and he put the information to good use.

Fortunately, there is more evidence in *The Roster and Record* than the clerical entries quoted above. There are also extensive regimental histories, written long years after the War, to be sure, but valuable because they were based in part on testimony of participants. These regimental histories, supplemented by standard accounts of the War by Iowa historians who were eye witnesses to much they described, yield far more information than the meagre company entries in *The Roster and Record*.

Consulting these sources, we may examine the case of Cyrus W. West. The first question is what battle took place at or near Monroe, Missouri (also called Monroe Station) on July 11, the reported place and time of his death? There was no pitched battle there, but extensive skirmishing occurred nearby on July 9 - 11 along the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad. Possession of the rail line would have been a vital link in the Federal strategy aimed

at control of northern Missouri. Therefore, the reports of these skirmishes must be taken more seriously than their military scale would otherwise indicate.

The Roster and Record asserts West was "killed in action," inferring that he was killed by an enemy bullet or other weapon while in combat, but there is evidence to the contrary. Buried deep in a Military Correspondent's letter to the *Cedar Falls Gazette* for July 26, is this casual statement about the Federal victory:

And thus ended the fight at Monroe Station. Upon our side no one was wounded, one soldier named West of Company H, 3rd Regiment, shot himself by accidental discharge of his own gun.

The Military Correspondent's account of West's accidental death is substantiated by other sources. A highly-regarded statistical study of military casualties during the War lists a mortality table for the Third Iowa Infantry, giving the "battle" at Monroe Station as the first engagement of that unit. The table shows only one casualty under the heading "killed and mortally wounded." No names are given in the study, but it seems safe to accept it as verification of the Correspondent's assertion that there was only one casualty, which had to be Private West. Still another source, written by an author with an inside view of the Third Regiment, Lieutenant S. D. Thompson, reads as follows: "In Company H of our regiment, a gun went off by accident, killing one man as he lay in the trench." Finally, there is the best evidence of all: the official Military Service Record of

Private West, preserved in the National Archives. The portion of greatest importance states simply: "July 1861 - killed by accident, July 11, 1861, Monroe."

Cyrus W. West was the only fatality listed for the Third Iowa Infantry before the Battle of Wilson's Creek on August 10. His death was commemorated by a plaque in the City Park of Oskaloosa, the seat of West's home county, that reads as follows:

In Memory
Private Cyrus W. West
Company H, Third Regiment
Iowa Volunteer Infantry, Mahaska County
Killed July 11, 1861
In the Battle of Monroe, Missouri
First Iowa Volunteer to Die in the
Civil War in Defense of the Union

It has not been possible to establish the exact date the plaque was made and first put on display, but it now hangs in the Nelson Pioneer Farms Museum in Oskaloosa.

As unglamorous as death by a self-inflicted wound seems, there is no doubt West was a "casualty" well in advance of Shelby Norman.

As to Norman himself, the printed literature is sparse, considering his fame as the reputed first fatality. *The Roster and Record* entry even misspelled his name! And, actually, Muscatine's claim on him is slight -- at the time of his enlistment he had only recently come out from Ohio with an older sister. He appeared in the 1850 Census for Hopewell Township, Muskingum County, Ohio along with his family, but neither he nor

his father appeared there in the Census for 1860. In one account, depended on heavily by some writers, Norman is described as a "fair-haired boy of seventeen," whose death was instantaneous when struck by a bullet that pierced the brain. This statement may be completely accurate, but most historians have failed to notice it does not come from company records but is part of an undated regimental history written by an anonymous historian and published in 1908 as part of an introduction to the pertinent chapter on the First Iowa Infantry in *The Roster and Record*. Even more frequently overlooked is the further point that the bullet was received while Norman was marching to the field of battle at Wilson's Creek from Springfield, a distance of 12 miles, *not* while engaged on the battlefield.

After checking other sources, it becomes evident there was a great deal of

preliminary maneuvering, sending out of scouts, and petty skirmishing, especially on August 2-3, well before the pitched battle on August 10. During these preliminary operations, the regiment sustained 12 casualties, but no attempt was made by anyone to keep a formal, day-to-day record. They were simply lumped together without discrimination as to the exact date or place, all under the heading of casualties at Wilson's Creek on August 10. Thus, there is a real possibility that a complete day-by-day report might show Shelby Norman's death occurred on any date between August 2 and August 10. Only the discovery of a diary or a letter from a companion who saw him fall would allow us to pinpoint the exact date and place of his death. The blanket entry, "died at Wilson's Creek, August 10," may be as inaccurate for others as it is for Shelby Norman; on the other hand, it may be completely accurate.



The charge of the First Iowa at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri, August 10, 1861 (from Leslie's *Illus. Famous...*, 31).

The records are inexact -- a weakness of which the Adjutant General and others were well aware. Obviously, a close examination of the names and dates of all fatalities of the First Iowa Infantry Regiment is in order. A microscopic look at the data in *The Roster and Record* turns up several names demanding further study and suggests other candidates for the honor of Iowa's first fatal casualty in the Civil War.

The *Roster and Record* lists seven men as killed in the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Shelby Norman among them, although we now know the designation to have been inexact. In addition, nine other soldiers are listed as having died between May 14, 1861 (the muster-in date of the First Iowa) and August 10 (the day of the major battle). Judging from the inconsistent and undoubtedly inaccurate reports made by company clerks, several of these nine casualties -- defining "casualty" as any service-related death, including disease -- may be the best candidate for the honor of first. A close examination, marshalling evidence from every available source, including Military Service Records, *Roster and Record* entries, and other records, is necessary -- with particular attention to time of death.

Benjamin Burris of Company C died, according to *The Roster and Record*, at an early date, July 23, while the First Iowa Infantry was in camp at Boonville, Missouri, preparing to march to the Springfield area. The cause of death was typhoid fever, one of the dread diseases at any Civil War encampment of soldiers. A soldier of Company A, Judd Clark, also died of typhoid fever "at Springfield, Mo." in the words of *The Roster and Record*. John J. Wiley, also of Company A, is

listed simply as having died "on march near Springfield, Mo." His Military Service Record is more specific. It reads: "Absent sick left on March from Springfield to Rolla Aug. 12/61 supposed dead." The meagre statement can only mean that Wiley's condition made it impossible for him to keep up with his company on the hasty march after the defeat at Wilson's Creek and he was abandoned, "supposed dead." It is impossible to establish a date for Clark's death until new evidence is found.

Charles Henke, a German-born soldier of Company H, presents an even more perplexing case. *The Roster and Record* noted he was "Supposed to have been drowned in Grand River, Missouri, as he was missing and a body was seen to sink in the river." This is not firm evidence, and his Military Service Record is equally vague. It shows he had enlisted at Dubuque, mustered in at Keokuk on May 14, and was "missing since July 10th '61. Supposed to be drowned in Grand River, Mo." This evidence is too slim to advance Henke's name as the first war-related fatality, but if convincing information ever becomes available, Henke might be given high priority.

The Roster and Record notes that Franklin Mann of Company F was "Wounded in leg Aug. 10, 1861, Wilson's Creek, Mo. Died of wounds same day." A similar entry for Frederick Otte of Company H reads: "Died of wounds Springfield." While it is possible these two casualties were recorded as inexact as was Shelby Norman's there is no compelling reason to place their deaths ahead of his. Likewise, the death of George Kargel, Company H, on "Aug. 12, 1861, Springfield" seems to rule him out.

A much more serious claim may be

advanced for Thomas McGinnis (misspelled Maginus in *The Roster and Record*). The brief entry reads: "Mustered May 14, 1861. Died of typhoid fever Pond Spring, Mo." McGinnis' Military Service Record supplies the information that he enrolled at Keokuk on May 7, 1861, was mustered on May 14, and "died at Camp McClelland [sic] near Springfield, Mo. July 29, 1861 of Typhoid Fever." Camp McClelland was located at or near Pond Spring. The Casualty Sheet in his Military Service Record was certified by the same company commander as was Shelby Norman's, and the two soldiers served in the same company. The date of McGinnis' death, July 29, is 18 days after Cyrus West's, but definitely before Shelby Norman's.

The final name to consider is Smith H. Tullis of Company C. His case is paramount, because it appears very likely that he was the first fatal casualty among Iowa troops in the Civil War. *The Roster and Record* is distressingly brief: "Died of pneumonia, Keokuk, Iowa." Fortunately, his Military Service Record is more informative. It says he enrolled in Company C, First Iowa Infantry (the second company to be raised in Muscatine), on April 22, 1861, at the age of 23. He was mustered on May 14, although he had "joined for duty and enrolled" on May 6 at Keokuk. The Military Service Record further shows he was "sick at Keokuk since May 18th" and "Died on or about July 3, 1861, at Keokuk." The latter entry is by the "War Department, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, May 4th,

1867." The MSR also shows Tullis' name on the Company Muster-Out Roll, U.S. Arsenal, St. Louis, Missouri, May 29, 1861. He was last paid on May 14, 1861. This information raises the prospect of a soldier who had been mustered out, yet who remained in a military hospital where he died "on or about July 3." There are some technical problems with this information which may never be completely resolved, but the evidence is clear that Tullis was a fully-enrolled soldier in the Union Army who died while in service, eight days before Cyrus West and several weeks before Shelby Norman.

From peripheral sources, we learn more about the circumstances of Tullis' demise. The First Iowa Infantry assembled in rendezvous at Keokuk between May 1 and May 8 and was mustered in on May 14. On June 13, the regiment left for Hannibal, Missouri by steamboat. *The Muscatine Daily Journal* reported the following day, June 14, that "Pvt. Tullis is at the hospital in town, quite ill with billious fever." Obviously, Tullis had taken ill and was left behind when the troops moved south. This assumption is confirmed by another report in the *Daily Journal* for June 20: "Pvt. Tullis we left at the hospital too sick to move."

The *Daily Journal's* companion newspaper, the *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, carried a report (probably from the same correspondent) on July 5, confirming the evidence of the official military records: "Smith H. Tullis, a member of Company C, 1st Iowa Regiment, died of Typhoid fever in the hospital at Keokuk, and his

body was brought to this place on the Steamer Pomeroy yesterday."

The strands of evidence weave together to make a clear and (at present) irrefutable claim on behalf of Private Smith H. Tullis as the first fatal casualty among Iowa troops in the Civil War. Shelby Norman can be ranked no better than

fifth in line of precedence. Ahead of him come Thomas McGinnis, Benjamin Burris, Cyrus West, and Smith H. Tullis. Charles Henke's claim is clouded by insufficient evidence. In the end, Muscatine can still lay claim to the first fatal Iowa casualty, although the death of Tullis came from fever and not a bullet. □

Note on Sources

Many people have assisted me in the preparation of this article, and to all of them I am deeply grateful. Dr. Peter T. Harstad, Director, and Mrs. Joyce Giaquinta, Manuscript Librarian, Iowa State Historical Department, Division of the State Historical Society, have been extremely generous in the time devoted to a search for materials. Mr. Jack Musgrove, Director, and Ms. Lida L. Greene, Librarian, Division of Museum and Archives, Des Moines, located the Minutes of the Monument Commission that were essential to this study. Mr. Douglas Randleman, a true history buff and an active member of the Muscatine Area Heritage Association, gave invaluable assistance and enlisted the aid of his fellow citizens, Mrs. Barbara Bublitz of the P. M. Musser Library and Mr. Lamoyne Jacobs, Custodian of the Greenwood Cemetery. Mrs. Leta C. Strah of the Oskaloosa, Iowa Public Library sent valuable information, as did Mr. Curtis Frymoyer, Wilton, Iowa and Professor B. B. Lightfoot of Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield. Edward Wagner, University of Northern Iowa Library, was helpful, as always. Herbert V. Hake loaned materials on the Battle of Wilson's Creek, and he and LeRoy H. Redfern, Cedar Falls, kindly read the article in its early stages and gave valued criticism.

An annotated copy of this article with numbered footnotes is available in the files of the Division of the State Historical Society.

For any study pertaining to the personnel of Iowa regiments, the starting point is *The Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion* (6 vols. Des Moines: State of Iowa, Emory H. English, State Printer, 1908-1911). This should be supplemented by Addison A. Stuart, *Iowa Colonels and Regiments...* (Des Moines: Mills & Co., 1865); Lurton D. Ingersoll, *Iowa and the Rebellion* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1866); Samuel H. M. Byers, *Iowa in War Times* (Des Moines: W. D. Condit Co., 1888). For general information on the Missouri political and military situation

in 1861, see William E. Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1860-1865* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1964); Robert E. Shalhope, *Sterling Price: Portrait of a Southerner* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971). Edwin C. Bearss, "The Battle of Wilson's Creek," *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), 36 (Fall 1961), 81-109; (Winter 1962), 161-78; Lucile Morris Upton, "Wilson's Creek Story," Springfield, Missouri *Leader-Press*, Anniversary Edition, August 8, 1961; and John K. Hulston's Foreword to Hans Christian Adamson, *Rebellion in Missouri: 1861* (Philadelphia and New York: Chilton Co., 1961) give copious details about the Battle of Wilson's Creek which made possible a clearer understanding and interpretation of statements about Iowa casualties.

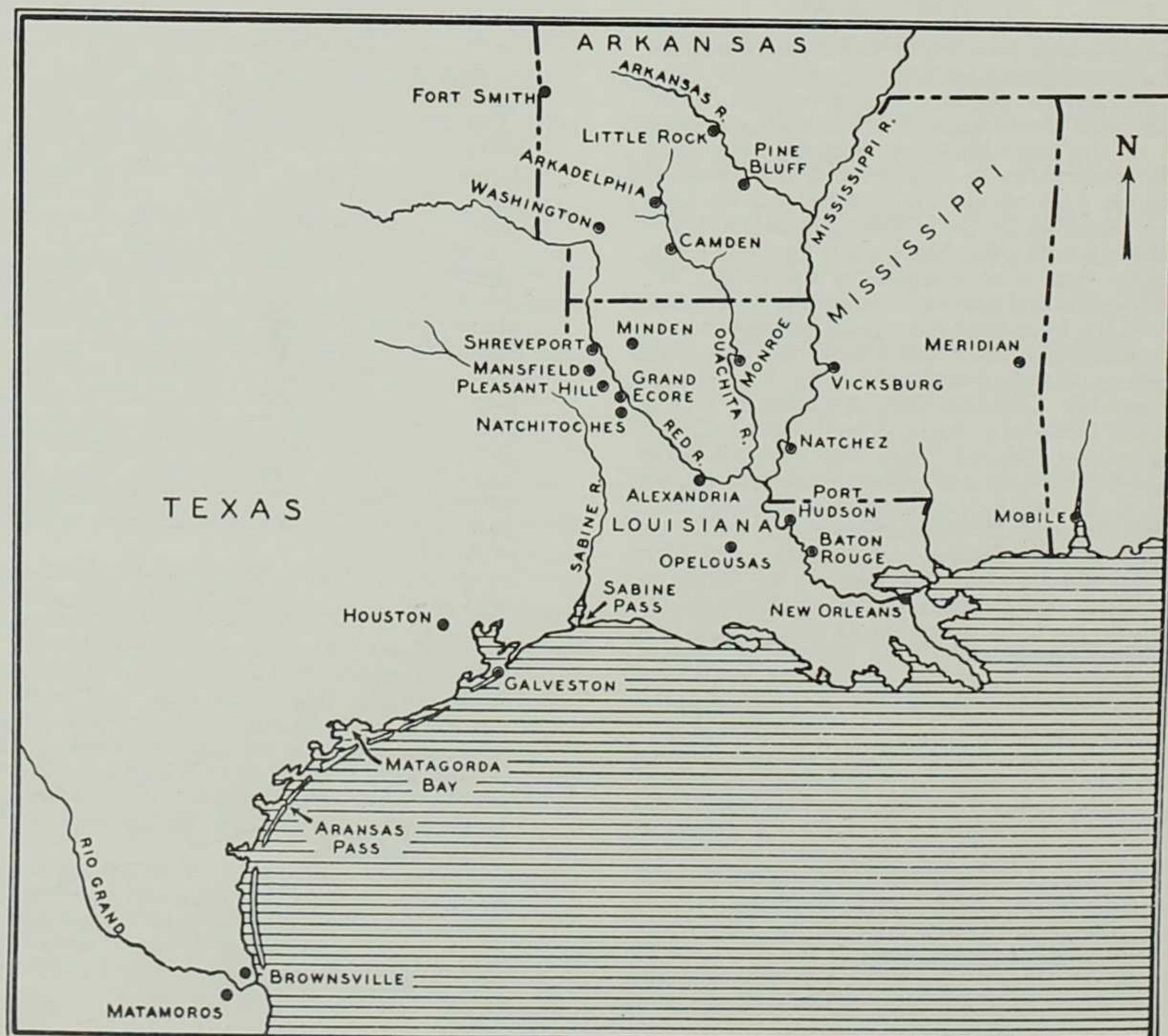
James Harlan, "The Iowa Soldier's and Sailor's Monument," *The Midland Monthly*, 5 (February 1896), 99-113, gave an insider's view on the subject as seen by a member of the Monument Commission. Elizabeth Clarkson Zwart's column, "The Front Row," *Des Moines Tribune*, December 4, 1950, page 13, column 7, gave an extensive and fascinating account of the plan of the Monument.

Irving B. Richman, the distinguished lawyer-historian of Muscatine, has a useful *History of Muscatine County* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1911). Jacob A. Swisher, "Remember Our Heroes," *The Palimpsest*, 23 (June 1942), and *Iowa in Times of War* (Iowa City: SHSI, 1943), present briefly the case for Cyrus W. West. William F. Fox, compiler, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War* (Albany: Albany Pub. Co., 1889), should be consulted. S. D. Thompson, *Recollections with the Third Iowa Regiment* (Cincinnati: published by the author, 1864), gives background for the Cyrus W. West incident.

That great storehouse of information, *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, usually abbreviated simply as *OR*, has much data on the Battle of Wilson's Creek, but nothing pertaining to the personal records treated above. See Series I, Vol. 3, pp. 40-41; 55-130.

An Iowa Private in the Civil War

by
George Hanrahan



"Good-by. I'm off to war."

With these simple words, Laurence Hannan said farewell to his sister Caty, tied his horse in the farm field, climbed a fence, and walked off to the Civil War. The date was September 10, 1862; the place was Taylor Township in eastern Allamakee County, Iowa. Hannan, then in his early twenties, went down the Mississippi to Dubuque, arriving there the evening of the next day, September 11. He was never to see his family again.

Born to Irish immigrants, Peter Hannan and Bridget Whalen Hannan who came to America in 1837 and were married in New York in 1838, Laurence was the oldest of five children. He was born in New York City, though like his brother and sisters Mary, Johanna, Catherine, and James, family records are incomplete as to birth dates, with the exception of Catherine--or Caty--who was born on December 25, 1849, also in New York City. Sometime in the 1850s, the family moved to Allamakee County in the northeast corner of Iowa and settled on a farm.

When the Civil War broke out in April 1861, his father needed him to help on the farm so Laurence did not enlist, but as more and more of his friends left, the romantic notions of war and the strong patriotic sentiment in northeast Iowa apparently became too much for him. Two months after he had joined the Army, he seemed to have second thoughts. In one of his early letters home, he told his sister Johanna: "I took a sudden start...I never would have started if things went right. My name today

would not be on the army roll only for too much selfishness. You asked me before if anyone knew anything of my starting. Not one. I had not the slightest idea the day before."

Laurence mailed the letter from Camp McClellan in Davenport, where he mustered into Company B, Twelfth Iowa Infantry Regiment, on October 20, 1862 after enlisting on September 12. By the time he joined, the Twelfth Regiment of Iowa Volunteer Infantry was a veteran fighting outfit. The ten companies comprising the Twelfth had been raised at Dubuque on dates ranging from October 17 to November 25, 1861 about a year before Private Hannan left the farm. Decimated by the heavy fighting in Tennessee at Shiloh and Corinth, battles Laurence was fortunate to have missed, the regiment, low in manpower, had been pulled back to Camp McClellan where fresh recruits like Hannan once again filled the ranks.

According to the Company B Descriptive Book, Private Hannan was 23 years old, 5 feet 7½ inches tall, dark complected with grey eyes and brown hair. Like thousands of others, his occupation was listed as "farmer." Two tintypes Laurence sent home to his family show a young-looking face with chin whiskers, but no mustache or sideburns. The pictures were probably taken in Davenport--in a November 20, 1862 letter from Camp McClellan, Private Hannan told his family: "You may expect my likeness soon."

Camp McClellan was the first and most important of five military camps

maintained at Davenport at various times during the Civil War. Established in 1861, it was located just east of the city on a bluff above the Mississippi. (Today, within the present city limits, the site has become a park.) Private Hannan's letters talked of day-to-day life in the Camp: "We have straw ticks to sleep on." (Nov. 20, 1862) "Our water is hauled here by a drayman in a hogshead & he puts it in our barrels. There has been two until of late. He is just as busy on Sunday as any other day.... It is surprising to see all the clothing there is in Davenport at the R. Road depot. There is clothes for 9,000 men that are to be drafted.

"As a general thing everybody is clean. Lice are called Grey Backs. They say there are plenty of Grey Backs in where the prisoners were kept so big that they carried the ashes out of the stoves during the night. Nobody here can keep the dust out of the heads sleeping on those blankets. When ever the barracks are swept out nobody can see another." (Dec. 12, 1862)

"I will tell ye about Christmas. The morning was dark and cloudy. It commenced to rain lightly about 9 o'clock in the morning. It kept on all day and night. We had a fiddle in the barracks at night. We danced until about 12 o'clock.

"We have things more complete now than ever. We sit down to two meals. Now we have two long tables about the length of 100 ft. It is a sight to see so many tin dishes. We eat in the old hospital.... There is very little sickness here now, only colds." (Dec. 28, 1862)

Private Hannan seemed often to think of home and family. He ended most of his letters with a plea to "write soon." In a November 20, 1862 letter, he prom-



Laurence Hannan wrote from camp in Nov. 1862: "You may expect my likeness soon." (courtesy of the author)

ised that "when I come home I shall bring ye all some presents." And he addressed a few words to his sister Caty, who would be 13 on Christmas Day: "Caty, I suppose you are at school every day. You must write some to me."

Caty was again in his thoughts on December 28, 1862: "Caty I do often think of the morning I last saw you. Let me know how Christmas and New Years passed. I wish you a happy time of it. I would be very glad to see you. I guess it will not be long until I do.... Write soon. Let me know everything."

Laurence hungered for news from home. On February 1, 1863 he asked after the doings in society: "Mary, Johanna and Caty, I hope you are enjoying yourselves this winter. Let me know if ye have been to any dance or ball this winter. If I get any money I will send ye some money and ye may enjoy the sport. Let me know all the particulars.

"I think I should have a letter before this. Answer this immediately."

But Private Hannan was concerned not only with family news and camp life. In his letters of December 1862 and

of January and February 1863, he talked often of the rumors of peace, worried where the regiment might be going and when he might hope to get out:

"I suppose ye see the contradictory reports of peace in the papers. I am sure the war will be over by spring. It is the talk of everybody. The night the news came to Rock Island that Illinois had gone Democratic you never heard such firing of cannon for half the night...I have learned a good deal since I joined the army. I am 3 months enlisted today." (Dec. 12, 1862)

"I believe I will be here all winter." (Dec. 28, 1862)

"There is talk of an armistice for six months here in the paper. The paroled prisoners of the 12th are expected here soon. We will go either to Dubuque or St. Louis soon. The boys who came from below (the Regiment veterans) have got furloughs to the 27th. When they come back we will go some where. Some say we will be sent to Washington or somewhere on the Potomac. More say we will be disbanded. There is no telling what will be done with us. Some say also we will not leave until May. I think we will soon have peace. I suppose you see the papers. There is talk of foreign intervention in them." (Jan. 14, 1863)

No foreign power intervened, peace did not come, and the regiment was not disbanded. It waited for two more months in camp, for its orders, amid rumors and gossip. Apparently there was a dispute between Union generals over who should receive the prisoners paroled from Southern prison camps. On February 1, Laurence wrote: "I think we will move soon somewhere," but it was not so soon. The detachment that wintered at Camp McClellan finally left

for St. Louis in late March and arrived there on March 29, 1863. The new recruits and veterans back from furlough proceeded to Benton Barracks where they joined the regiment's other survivors and paroled prisoners. On Thursday, April 9, 1863 the reassembled regiment, with a "total of 450 muskets," embarked on the steamer *Planet* for the trip down the Mississippi. It arrived at Duckport, Louisiana nine miles above Vicksburg, on April 14 to join in the Siege of Vicksburg, where the Twelfth was assigned--with the Eighth and Thirty-fifth Iowa Regiments--as Third Brigade (Colonel Woods commanding) of the Third Division (Gen. James Tuttle commanding) of the Fifteenth Corps (Gen. W. T. Sherman commanding). After a long march through Louisiana, the Twelfth crossed the Mississippi River to Grand Gulf, Mississippi then marched eastward to join the rest of the army already on its way to the rear of Vicksburg.

Private Hannan apparently saw his first action on May 14 when the Fifteenth Corps pressed to within a mile and a half of Jackson, Mississippi, where they found the enemy strongly entrenched. Companies B and C of the Twelfth were deployed as skirmishers and, advancing across a low meadow in a pelting rain, drove the enemy inside his works. The Rebels then pulled out of Jackson, and the Federals occupied the capital of Mississippi. On Saturday, May 16, Sherman's troops moved out again and on May 18 reached a point north of Vicksburg, shutting the city in on the north.

The Vicksburg campaign was followed by almost three months of comparative rest. The Twelfth went into camp on the Black River, eight miles in the rear of Vicksburg. The Black River,

which runs southwest across the state, enters the Mississippi River south of Vicksburg. Hannan's Company B was stationed at Stevens, Mississippi. He reported home, in a letter dated September 20, 1863, that "I am still in good health and I hope this will find ye in good health." The letter told of scouting missions and skirmishing. "In my letter of Sunday," he wrote, "I spoke of some of our men being out on a scout. On Sunday 3 of our men were out on the watch watching while the rest were laying in the woods and weeds. 8 Rebs rode up to the three men and ordered them to surrender, at the same time fired a volley.

"All the rest came out. The Rebs turned around 2 of their horses were killed and two of them were wounded, in one of the saddles there was a bullet hole.

"A nigger saw them behind Harris' field, 2 on one horse. The one behind was holding his arm with his other hand."

Hannan then went on to say:

"It is believed in camp today that there was a fight this morning at Black River Bridge. Firing commenced this morning between 3 and 4. Artillery and musketry firing was heard. The bridge is about 8 miles from here.

"The 8 and 12 Reg. went out yesterday on a scout but saw nothing...."

Private Hannan, in his surviving letters, took no apparent stand on the issue of slavery. His references to "nigs" and "niggers" would not be acceptable now, but they were in his day. He mentioned the Emancipation Proclamation in his letter of January 14, 1863, but did not make his own feelings clear. The proclamation by President Lincoln, freeing the slaves in those parts of the nation still in rebellion, had gone into effect on New Year's Day. Said Hannan, writing from

Camp McClellan: "The Proclamation is not endorsed by a majority here. The boys in the union brigade do not like it. They say the army below is also opposed to it. There is a few everywhere who endorse it."

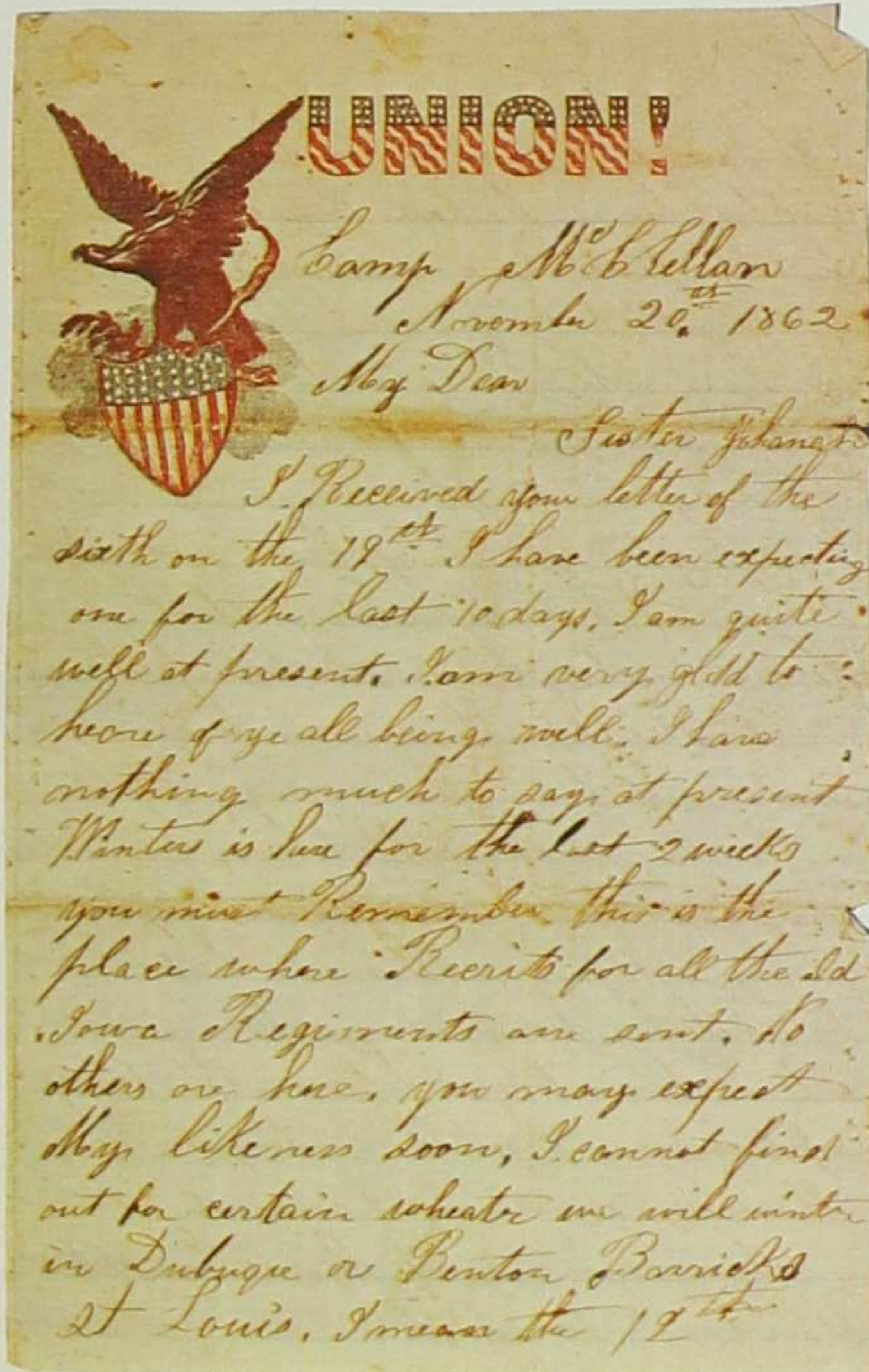
The Twelfth Regiment remained at Stevens until November 1863, when it was assigned to the Third Brigade, First Division of Maj. Gen. Stephen Hurlbut's Sixteenth Corps, and ordered to the Memphis, Tennessee area. The men left Vicksburg on November 9, 1863, on the steamer *Thomas E. Tutt* and arrived in Memphis on November 12. The Twelfth was sent to Chewalla, 90 miles east of Memphis, to guard a section of railroad which had been undergoing raids by rebel cavalry.

Writing from Chewalla on December 7, 1863, Private Hannan described some of the action:

"Pretty serious events have occurred since my last letter around here. On last Monday night the last of Nov. the guerillas burned a bridge about two miles from here towards Pocahontas. It was about midnight.

"After they set the fire they went north. Co. F of our Reg was one mile beyond the R.R. up they came when F let them have a volley, one horse was killed. About six blankets and six hats three guns were left behind.

"Next night a train was fired into near La Grange. [Nathan Bedford] Forrest, [Samuel] Ferguson, [James] Chalmers [all Confederate generals] and others formed a junction about Pocahontas, Wed. so that fighting has been going on along the road until about Sat. The Rebs had, it is reported, 8,000 men, all mounted, and 8 pieces of artillery. It is said we took 800 prisoners.



(courtesy of the author)

"Several miles of the road is destroyed between here and Memphis. Mostly every bridge is burned. There is a piece of trestle work about 4 miles from here. One Co. is there all the time. Each Co. stays 2 days at a time. No cars have run at all this week only from here to Corinth. It will take some days yet I believe to have the road in running order....

"I have heard nothing of Forrest since Sat. This trestle work I spoke of is at Cypress River....I forgot to say we were about out of rations and could get none from Memphis so we got 5 days rations from Corinth."

On February 1, the Twelfth was ordered to return to Memphis. They then went downriver to Vicksburg again, arriving there March 5. Writing from

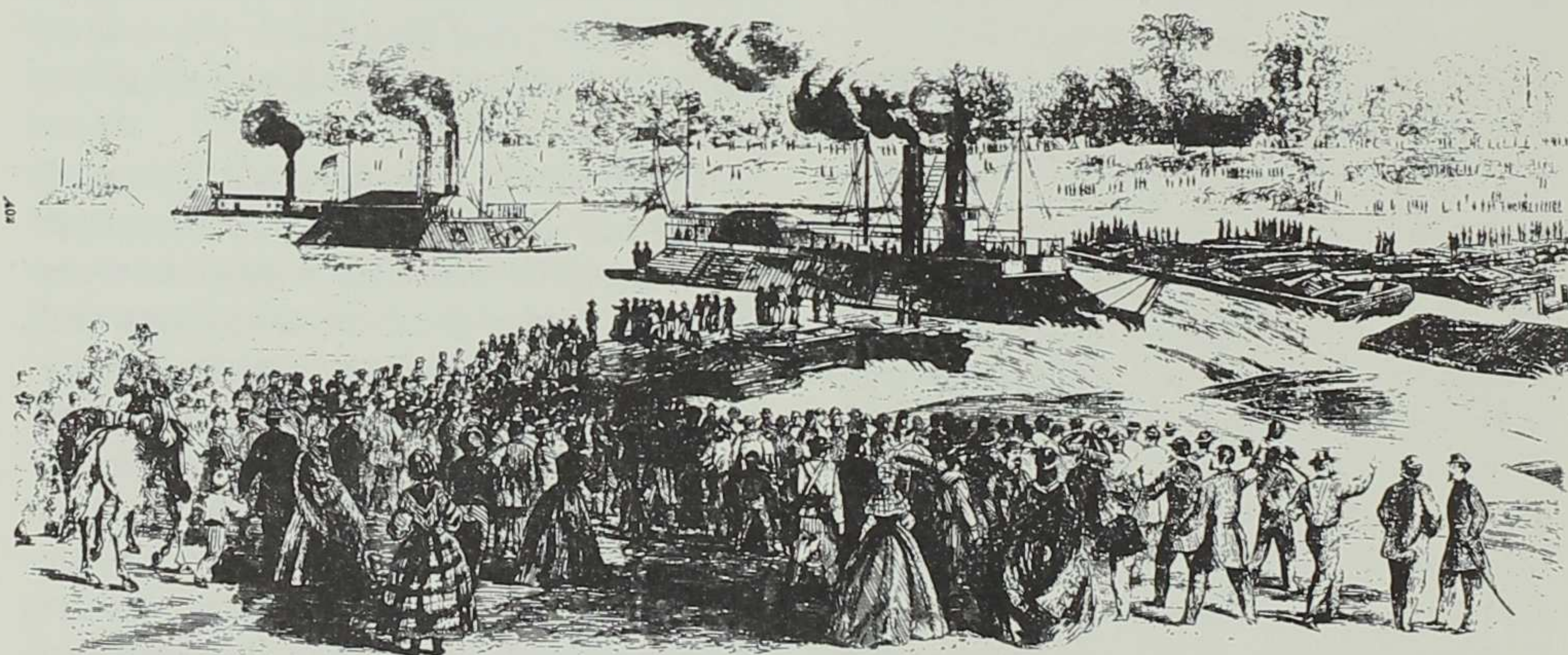
Vicksburg on the day of his arrival, Private Hannan told of rumors of the future:

"We are going some where not known for certain. Some say down the Miss. and up Red River. That is contradicted again by the report that Red River is too low, and boats cannot go up. Some think we go home soon."

Unfortunately for Private Hannan, he did not go home. Veteran members of the Twelfth who had re-enlisted were given furloughs. But Private Hannan and about 70 of his comrades were temporarily transferred to the Thirty-fifth Iowa to take part in the Red River campaign--Hannan's last.

Various objectives have been given for the Red River campaign--capture of Shreveport, Louisiana, the center of a rich cotton district, in order to secure cotton for the mills of the North; full military possession of all parts of Louisiana and Arkansas in the Red River area; positioning for the occupation of Texas.

Gen. Nathaniel Banks, as senior commander, worked out the Federal plans for the disastrous operation. Private Hannan was in a task force commanded by Gen. A. J. Smith, which left Vicksburg on March 10, 1864 and was escorted into the Red River by Admiral David Porter with "the most formidable force that had ever been collected in western waters"--13 ironclads and seven light-draught gunboats. Smith's command entered Alexandria without opposition. The Rebel force, under the command of Gen. Richard Taylor, retreated up the Red River. After several minor clashes, a general engagement erupted late in the day of April 8. The Federals, with Banks now in command, were routed with a loss of 2,500 prisoners and much equipment. This was the battle of



Porter's fleet passing a special dam above Alexandria during the Red River campaign (from Leslie's Illus. Famous..., 402).

Sabine Cross Roads. That night Banks withdrew his forces to Pleasant Hill, and in an ensuing battle on April 9, Taylor's attack was repulsed with heavy loss.

Writing in *Iowa in War Times*, S. H. M. Byers said that in the battle of Pleasant Hill the Thirty-fifth Iowa "was thrown to the front and shared the hard fighting and the victory of the day. Capt. Henry Blanck was killed as were many of the privates." Byers also described the aftermath of the battle: "Gen. Banks did not realize that his troops had won a victory at Pleasant Hill and that the Rebels were checked. Apparently frightened by the disaster of Sabine Cross Roads, and by the fierce opposition at Pleasant Hill, he sounded the grand retreat--a retreat full of hardships and some fighting on the way, and that did not stop short of the Mississippi river."

Private Hannan also did not realize that the Rebel troops had been repulsed.

Writing from Grand Ecore, Louisiana, on April 18, Hannan told of the battle of Pleasant Hill in his most descriptive letter:

"I suppose before you get this you will have heard of Banks defeat at Pleasant Hill....[Fighting] did not commence in earnest until 4 p.m. From then until after dark the musketry firing was the heaviest I ever heard. I thank God that I was not struck. I thought one time we were all gone.

"The Rebs forced the front line to give way. Back they came and the Rebs close behind. When they got at good range the second line with the artillery let into them so they turned back into the woods again. We followed up. They soon turned around again. But they were again driven back. This was about dark and was the last attempt made.

"We commenced to retreat that night at 2 o'clock. Banks lost first day 22 pieces

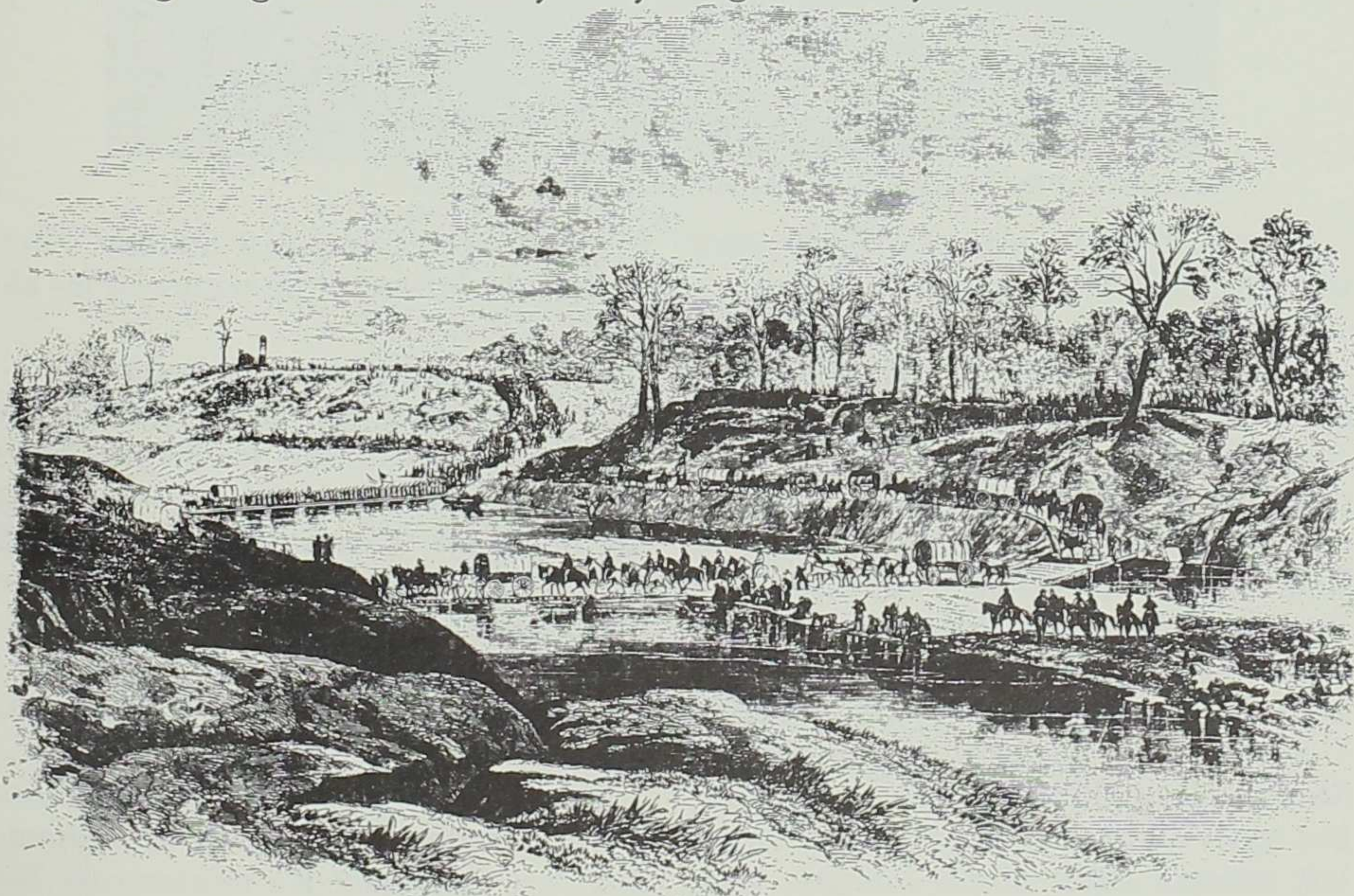
of artil., 117 wagon loads of ammunition, and over 60 wagons of the provision train. One whole brigade of Cavalry was also captured. The rest is nothing of the 13 Corps left they are all taken prisoners. It was a total defeat.

"All the dead and wounded were left on the field besides any amount of small arms. When I was coming back over the field that night the wounded were groaning and grunting all over. The first [question] was sure to be have you any water. Yes, and you give him a drink. The next question is can't you take or help me off this field. Poor fellows were all left behind to fall into the hands of the rebels.

"Coming along the road next day every

thing could be picked up. I saw two forges or black smith shops thrown off the wagons.

"We reached here on the third night. This little town of Grand Ecore is on Red River. I believe we go back soon. The Rebels had over 35,000 men. Same time we left here the boats started up river until they found it blocked up by a sunken steam boat. They were making ready to blow it up, when a courier arrived ordering them back. But when they turned to come back the Rebels had a battery below them. It kept them there 3 days but did not do much harm for the gun boats were there. They stole by at night. This is just the outlines of it."



Banks' army at Cane River (from Leslie's Weekly At the Front with the Army and the Navy, 44).



Mementoes of Pvt. Hannan (courtesy of the author)

Private Hannan closed off his April 18 letter with this poignant wish:

"I would like some mush and milk."

Some time after the battle of Pleasant Hill, Private Hannan was taken ill, but records--Army and family--do not disclose the ailment. A short family history compiled in 1903 said he was "injured in Red River expedition." The May and June and July muster rolls of Company B listed him as "absent--sick in Hosp[ital], Memphis." The muster roll of Overton U.S.A. General Hospital in Memphis for May and June, 1864 listed him as present, but gave no clue as to his illness. In his last existing letter home--Sunday, June 14, 1864--Private Hannan said "my health

is much better than last Sunday." But, again, no clue as to the nature of his ailment.

Some excerpts from that letter:

"You see it in the papers there is not much stirring. Nothing new in the papers so I scarcely know what to say. One thing the summer is now at hand, and ye will soon be harvesting. I hope there will be an abundant harvest."

And his final salutation:

"I have not another word to say this time."

Records are sketchy from here on. Private Hannan was listed as "absent-sick" on Company B's muster rolls for July, August, September, and October

1864. Finally, on the muster roll for November and December, 1864 is this cryptic note: "Died of disease while on sick furlough home at Cairo, Ill., 28 July 1864." Apparently he had been given a furlough to go home and recuperate from his illness, but only got as far as Cairo, in the southern tip of Illinois, when he died. Even the exact date of his death is in question. The *Roster* of Iowa soldiers and the Company B Muster Roll list July 28. The Company B Muster-out Roll of November 30, 1864 says he died "about 27th July 1864," and on later

Company B Returns the date is given as "Aug. 1864." His discharge papers, dated January 20, 1865, say he died of "disease while on sick furlough, at Cairo, Ill., 18 July 1864." And the Inventory of his effects says he died in "the latter part of July."

Private Hannan was buried in a military cemetery at Cairo. After learning of the death of his son, Peter Hannan traveled to Cairo to see his son's grave and to pick up his personal effects: two cloth-covered buttons and five small keys. □

Note on Sources

The most important sources for this article were the private letters of Laurence Hannan. Family records and reminiscences and data from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. helped to fill in background and establish the context of the letters.

Material about the Civil War--especially Company B, Twelfth Iowa and Company I, Thirty-fifth Iowa Infantry Regiments--may be found in Maj. David W. Reed, *Campaigns and Battles of the Twelfth regiment, Iowa veteran volunteer infantry* (Evanston, Ill.: 1903); Addison A. Stuart, *Iowa Colonels and Regiments in the War of Rebellion* (Des Moines: Mills & Co., 1865); *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of Rebellion*, vol. 2 (Des Moines: State Printer, 1908-11); S. H. M. Byers, *Iowa in War Times* (Des Moines: W. D. Condit & Co., 1888); Jacob A. Swisher, *Iowa in Times of War* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1943); Mark M. Boatner, *The Civil War Dictionary* (N.Y.: D. McKay Co., 1959); and Ned Bradford (ed.), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (N.Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956).

In a few places I have used literary license to try to fill in some gaps, but these have been kept to a minimum. The spelling, punctuation and grammar of Private Hannan's letters have been changed to conform to modern English usage. Hannan's first name appears variously as "Laurence" and "Lawrence." The former, which appears on his letters, is used here uniformly throughout.

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