

Paying the First Iowa

Hiram Price, early leader in the fight for prohibition in Iowa, Member of Congress from 1863 to 1869 and from 1877 to 1881, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1881 to 1885, was forty-seven years old at the outbreak of the Civil War and did not enlist; but he gave infinite service to the cause as a civilian both in Iowa and in Congress. The letter printed below reveals an instance of this service. The delivery of the pay to the volunteers of the First Iowa must have been accomplished in the latter part of June or the first of July, 1861. On the third of July the regiment left Boonville for the south and a few weeks later were engaged in their one great battle, that of Wilson's Creek. The original of the letter is in the manuscript collection of Kirkwood Correspondence in the Historical Department at Des Moines, Iowa.—THE EDITOR.

Aug. 13th, 1886

Hon. Saml. J. Kirkwood

Dear Sir

I have just recd the Davenport Gazette giving an account of the reunion on the 10th Inst. I am glad to know that you were there and had a chance to talk to "*the boys.*" After the lapse of a

quarter of a century, I have not forgotten how the 1st Iowa was recruited, clothed (so far as shoes & blouses were concerned) and fed. I know something about how blankets, quilts & comforts were begged & borrowed in Davenport to fix up quarters in Nicholas Fejervary's block of buildings for the first companies. I have not forgotten how I succeeded (after repeated refusals by other parties whose patriotism did not reach their pockets) in getting Dan. Moore to feed them if I would be *personally* responsible for the payment. I have not forgotten, that Ezekiel Clark and myself, took our own money \$33,000 without any authority of law, or any certainty of ever getting one cent of it back, and travelled to Missouri, to pay the men who had left home & friends to risk their lives in defence of the Union & the old flag. We found the 2^d Iowa scattered along the R. Road all the way from Hannibal to St. Jo. & paid them their proportion. Then Mr. Clark was compelled to go to New York, leaving me alone to hunt up the 1st Iowa. I failed to get across the country to where I *supposed* the regiment was because the Rebels (our Southern Brothers) had possession of the roads and there were more of *them* than of *me*. So my only hope of success was by a flank movement, which required a detour via St. Louis. I succeeded finally by river, rail & foot in reaching Jefferson City, carrying *my* funds (not *Govt.* funds) in an old fashioned Iron bound hand trunk, or satchel, Jefferson City was full of Rebels

& I was an entire Stranger and alone. Col. Boernstien was in command of some troops at that place, with his head quarters in the State House. I called upon him, told him who I was, and that I was hunting the 1st Iowa Regt. to pay them some money, but I did not know exactly where the Regt. was, and asked him if he could tell me where to find the Regt. He said he could not tell for certain, but it was up the river in the direction of Booneville. I then asked him, if he thought I could go by waggon safely through the country. His reply was "You get your *throat* cut before you get five miles from here." Then I asked him if he would give me an escort, to which he replied, "I have not men enough to protect myself here." With these *kind* words and this *cheering* outlook I left him. I was armed with a single barrellled pistol about three inches long. I had then about \$22,000 in my hand trunk, because I had only paid the 2^d Iowa and the 1st & 3^d were yet to be paid. I sat up all of that night, (It was nearly night when I left the *hospitable* quarters of Col. Boernstien) with my hand trunk between my feet, and my artilery (3 inch pistol) in position ready to repel an attack of the enemy.

Now you will notice the Col. had refused me any assistance, and had given me the *cheering* assurance that if I attempted to reinforce Genl. Lyon with my money, I would get my *throat* cut. But I got there all the same, and "*the boys*" were glad to see me, and I was more than glad to be able to shed a little sun-

light up [the] dark pathway upon which they had entered. The record of the re-union of the 1st Iowa is noticable for the conspicuous manner in which the names of Mr. Clark and the Subscriber are *not mentioned*. While you have money muscle or brains to use for the benefit of the people you amt. to something, but not otherwise —

Very truly &c

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