

Last week the Trempealeau County Historical Society presented the first in a series of articles pertaining to Trempealeau County's contribution to the Civil War. This week's article is based on a letter from William Kribs to his father, F.H. Kribs, dated March 15, 1865. This letter is taken from the Trempealeau County Historical Society's Historical Collection. The following part of this article is that letter.

" In camp near Petersburg March 15/65.

Father.

Received yours of the 7th yesterday and it found me enjoying good health. I have not much time to write for this morning the order's came to Break Camp and everything is in confusion. We expect every moment to hear the Command "fall in" and then away. We go to some place to me unknown. We have packed up all our clothing & except what we have on and it is to be sent to Washington until next fall. The report is that we are going to cut off the communication between Lynchburg and Richmond but I don't know how true it is. I got the stamps all right and wrote back to let you know it and also that we received four months pay about the same time. I would send home fifty dollars if I had a chance but I think I would rather keep it than to risk it in a letter. Our campaign this spring is bound to finish up this war for the rebel army are deserting as fast as they can. I forgot to tell you that we were relieved at Fort Davison the last day of February and I have been with the Company since then, I have been on picket 3 times since I came back to the company. Our picket line and the "Johnnies" is about 80 rods apart here and in open sight but we have orders not to fire and the Johnnies don't often fire

unless it is in the night when some of their men are deserting and then they will sing out "lay low Yanks" and then we get into the rifle pits and dont get hit but some of the balls come close sometimes,

From the above rude map you can form a kind of an idea how a picket line is formed here the first line is a row of rifle pits about 3 rods apart each one the shape of a horseshoe and just large enough to protect one man and is called a vidette post. the third line is a row of rifle pits just like the others only farther apart and large enough to hold 7 men and called reserves. The videttes are releived every hour from the reserves and the whole line is releived every 24 hours from the regiments. the second line is a line of poles sharpened and stuck in the ground at an angle of 45 degrees and are just breast high they are to hinder any attack on our picket line. The Picket line is about a mile in advance of our main lines which are strongly fortified. I dont know when you will hear from me again for according to orders we start in the morning."

Yours

Wm Kribs

This letter was originally donated to the Trempealeau County Historical Society by William Kribs daughter, Ray Kribs Lyke. All spelling and grammatical errors have been left as William Kribs made them. It is the belief of this writer that to make such corrections would alter the historical nature of the letter.

This is just a sample of what is contained in the Historical Collection of the Trempealeau County Historical Society. The historical society has a

full time County Historian, Charles Beck, who has an office in the Courthouse, Whitehall, Wisconsin. That office is open during regular Courthouse hours 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday. The County Historian is also available for speaking engagements. If your group or organization would like the County Historian to present a program , just call the following number 715-538-2311 extension 276.