

CIVIL WAR DIARY

The official journey of Company H, 78th Regiment, Illinois Volunteers, from the date of their enlistment for Civil War duty on July 30, 1862, until the death of the company captain is in possession of John K. Allen of Osseo, Trempealeau County Treasurer. The last entry was made on March 16, 1863, and notations added in different handwriting following the last page state that the author of the journal, Col. J.K. Allen, died from wounds. Col. Allen was the paternal grandfather of a past county treasurer and this journal which is very well preserved was sent home to the family, together with his personal effects following the death of the colonel.

The journal opens with an account of the raising of the company to help meet a call for 600,000 men from the Union. Mr. Allen was one of five men who started an enlistment campaign and by August 2 the men they had mustered met at Dallas City, Illinois, for the election of officers. Meeting in the Stone church, according to the account Mr. Allen was elected captain by acclamation. G.T. Beers, who was elected 1st Lieutenant and Sgt. J. McNeill of the company were later killed in action as was 2nd Lt. E. McKirum and 2nd Lt. Samuel Simmons was invalided from wounds and sent home.

This was ^{the} first company formed of the new regiment and while waiting for the other companies to appear Company H was held up 10 days at Quincy, Illinois, during which time they had some desertions. The journal stated four men going to Chicago to join a German company and one disappeared entirely. When the regiment was ready to go into training W.H. Benneson became the colonel in charge.

Meanwhile, Company H had been presented with a silk flag by the ladies of Dallas City. Miss Lucie Hinkley having made the delivery address in a fitting ceremony, and every soldier in the secret depths of his heart took

an oath there in the presence of those fair ones never to see it tarnished nor deserted unless amid the carnage of battle, none were left to defend it. Reference to the manner in which the men kept their oath appeared from time to time later in the journal.

On September 1, members of the regiment were sworn into the U.S. service by a mustering officer and only three in Company H were rejected. Excitement began to run high on September 3, when late in the evening marching orders were given and four days ration were ordered prepared for each man. Captain Allen, who later was advanced to colonel, mentioned that the huge camp fires built to cook the rations made a beautiful sight, especially for the new soldier seeing them for the first time. But the marching orders were soon countermanded. So they remained in camp outside of Quincy.

September 4 was made memorable to the recruits by a huge picnic for them by the "liberals of Macomb". Attendance was estimated at 2,000, "the ardure of whom, especially the young misses in their white dresses and the young lads with their shining collars, etc. was somewhat dampened in the evening by the fall of a very heavy rain, which besides dampening the ladies and gents had an admirable tendency to test the capacity of our tents, which held good their reputation as to turning the rain from above, but wonderfully deficient in keeping it out from beneath, the rain having run under and almost floated some of us off.

On September 8 the paymaster paid the boys their months wages \$13 each. On September 17 they received their "arm-rifled muskets. The men of the regiment objected to receiving them, and each company put in a petition to the colonel not to take them. None of the petitions was presented, but the guns were boxed and didn't show up again until a few days later at Jeffersonville.

September 19 saw the order for leaving and four days rations given again. The following afternoon at 3 o'clock the men boarded open platform cars on the Quincy & Toledo road and started toward Springfield, whither some of the men thought they were bound, but after a short stop there the train proceeded across the Wabash River at Attica and stopped at Layfayette, Indiana, to exchange the train's locomotive for two small ones, one of which pulled and the other pushed. Arriving at Indianapolis, "a nice city displaying much taste and wealth," they remained there until 11 at night, then pushed on to Louisville and reached Jeffersonville at daylight.

"We were here (at Jeffersonville) in time to witness the excitement usually attending a city previous to a threatened attack. Bragg was menacing the city with an army estimated at from 40 to 60 thousand. The second day after our arrival he ordered the women and children out of the city, many of whom obeyed the mandate and shamefully many that obeyed were not women nor children either, but big robust Kentucky gents, who as far as physical appearances went, looked like they would have made excellent soldiers."

On that day, September 22 four 30 pound rifled cannon were placed on the bluff across the river from the city to command the approaches to the place from above. The following evening the regiment received orders to cross the river, which they did on ferries under cover of darkness, marched to the other side of the city and for the first time, the new soldiers made mother earth their bed by sleeping on blankets under the stars.

Called into line of battle early in the morning of September 25 by order of Major General Gilbert and dismissed soon after, the men concluded that this was done to accustom them to forming line in the night, but to

the sorrow of Col. Benneson they learned differently. After they had been dismissed Maj. Gen. Gilbert appeared on the scene and wanted to know why the soldiers were not standing in line of battle. "The colonel cried "Fall in boys" Gilbert countered, "Is your regiment made up of boys?" No sir replied the colonel, "It is made up of men. Call them men then", where upon we were called into line again and had the pleasure of standing there 'til daylight, much to the good of the Union and we presume to the satisfaction of Gen. Gilbert.

During many hours of rain on the following day the soldiers began to experience the realities of soldiering, with no shelter to protect them. Provisions were also running low, but their hunger was partly alleviated by a supply of "sweet potatoes which they jayhawked from a patch about three acres in extent, together with some apples, cabbage, etc. and were helping themselves bountifully when a general coming along for the purpose took some of us who unfortunately had not succeeded in procuring any of the spoils and whose legs had not been made to run, prisoners. They marched us up to where the lieutenant colonel sat crouched down in a fence corner in the rain, looking much like a drowned rat on a wet day with a huge pile of jayhawked potatoes at his feet. The colonel laughed as any other man would when the prisoners were brought up, and one of the boys observed that he thought the colonel too, had been in the potato patch from the indications. The prisoners were released and heard nothing more of the affair.

September 29 was made ~~exciting~~ ^{exciting} by the death of Major General Nelson, who was shot by Brigadier General Jeff C. Davis of Indiana. The history of the affair seems to amount to about the following: There seems to have been some difficulty existing between them prior to the tragedy, the cause

of which originated in the following manner: Davis went to Nelson to see about procuring arms for his command. Nelson asked him how many men he had? Davis answered, about 2500. "About", answered Nelson, "about", Why not say the exact number? Sir, I have a mind to take your command from you and send you over the river under a Provost guard. Davis in the mean time had explained to him that he did not come to get the arms, but to see as to the probability of getting them. A short time after, Davis called on Nelson at the Gault house. He stepped into his rooms, it being full of officers and spoke to Nelson, requesting him to step out, that he wanted to speak to him. "Go away you d---d cowardly son of a b---h," was Nelson's reply. Davis stepped back, procured a pistol of a friend and without further words, shot him, from which he died a few minutes after. The sentiment of soldiers and citizens generally was in Davis favor. He was arraigned before a court martial, which justified the act and cleared him honorably.

After having spent several days guarding Jeffersonville, the soldiers were ordered to march. They left at eight o'clock on the morning of October 6, making eleven miles that day and stopping at 5 P.M.. Continuing on the next day, they halted in midafternoon in Shepherdsville on the Salt River, having travelled 10 miles on foot. Here they were given the job of guarding a Louisville & Nashville railroad bridge which was being reconstructed after having been burned by the Rebels. While at this point one night, pickets were fired on and the report went out that the enemy was near. In the mean time, and before an order was given the drums in both regiments (the 78th and 91st of Illinois) beat the long roll. After the scare was over and we found no enemy to be near, it was truly amusing to think how the boys rolled out.

Prior to this it generally took the boys about half an hour to get up and into line, but this time two minutes had not elapsed before every man was out with gun in hand, looking bewilderedly around to see where the enemy was. But the most laughable part came when we learned that the cavalry which fired at the picket was nothing more than some of our own boys, who getting hungry for a little fresh pork had gone out and finding a squad of pigs, had fired into them.

The soldiers had an opportunity to view Paraquette Springs, one a popular resort, before given their marching orders again on October 14 and proceeded on that date to Belmont, an iron mining town all of whose inhabitants had joined the Union or Confederate armies or fled elsewhere except the proprietor of the storehouse. Before the 91st Regiment had been there long it was the presumption of the soldiers that he, too, wished himself away, for members of that outfit broke into the store room and helped themselves plentifully to tobacco, sugar and whiskey and got away with a considerable supply before guards were placed around the building.

From that date until January, 78th was stationed in and around New Haven, Kentucky and were occupied a great deal of the time at guarding railroad bridges, which the Rebels had a habit of destroying.

The first snow fell that year on October 23 and the soldiers experienced their first cold weather.

On October 27 the regiment, all except two companies left to guard bridges, were ordered to build a stockade right outside of New Haven, which was named Fort Allen, no doubt for Captain Allen of Company H. The stockade was built of timbers set on end and about seven feet above ground, so arranged as to set the soldier's tents, four in number on each corner, the corners being made circular 16 feet in diameter, the whole forming a square 45 feet.

The paymaster arrived at the fort^t on October 29 bringing \$27.25 for each, which included the bounty money which the soldiers had been promised and also \$2 premium. Captain Allen commented that Lt. World who holds an appointment from the President to transmit soldier's money home, was here and most of the boys sent the greater portion of their money by min. On that day General Dumont's division passed through on their way to Bowling Green.

A regiment mascot was secured in an amusing way. Ten men from the fort were detailed to accompany a wagon of provisions that was headed south for Wilson's Creek 17 miles below New Haven. In the neighborhood of a small town called Boston they came upon a flock of turkeys and the boys as from instinct all piled out of the wagon and caught two of them. During a court martial on the next day it was discovered that not only two turkeys but a rooster had been stolen. After the fines were paid, etc., the rooster was retained as a ~~mascot~~^{mascot} and remained with the regiment through its subsequent experiences.

Settled in their winter quarters the soldiers proceeded to relax and have a bit of fun. Many things afforded them amusement, among them the visits of civilians who tried to sell them various articles. One simple southerner approached with a sack of apples, which he offered to sell at 12 for five cents. Claiming that they had no change the soldiers offered him postage stamps in payment. Doubtful of their value he was very auspicious when he carried them off.

Another fellow brought to camp a bushel basket full of "possums". Asked what price they would be, the fellow said that some got \$1.25 apiece