

A HISTORY OF THE 24th IOWA INFANTRY
1862-1865

An Abstract of a Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
Western Illinois University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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August 1974

ABSTRACT

A HISTORY OF THE 24th IOWA INFANTRY

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On April 15, 1861, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for seventy-five thousand volunteers from the states not in rebellion. While not yet fifteen years old, the State of Iowa answered this call and future calls at an enviable rate. The state was credited with 76,309 enlistments; more than one half of Iowa's male population of military age bore arms. Forty-eight infantry regiments, nine cavalry regiments, and four artillery companies were organized during the four years of fighting. Iowa men were to win positions of high command during the war, and the state's regiments were prominent in most of the battles in the Western Theater.

One of the most interesting infantry regiments to see service was the Twenty-fourth Regiment of Iowa Volunteer Infantry. Colonel Eber C. Byam, a Methodist minister, organized this unit which was often referred to as the "Iowa Temperance Regiment." The Temperance Regiment, recruited mainly in east-central Iowa, first saw action in the Vicksburg Campaign, took an active part in the disastrous Red River Expedition, and was one of only three Iowa regiments to support General Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley. On July 17, 1865, the Twenty-fourth Regiment of Iowa Volunteer Infantry was mustered out of service in Savannah, Georgia,

where the unit had been serving as a rear guard to the army of General Sherman.

Although the 24th Iowa was a distinguished and battle-tested regiment of both the Western and Eastern Theaters of the Civil War, little has been formally written of its history. No published regimental history is known to exist, and summary sketches often describe the role of the 24th as viewed by the regiments that fought with it, rather than in terms of the 24th Iowa's personal achievements.

The thesis presents the regiment's history chronologically. Chapters cover: Iowa and the Civil War, the organization of the "Temperance Regiment," winter camp at Helena, Arkansas, the Vicksburg Campaign, the Red River Campaign, operations in the Shenandoah Valley, and guard duty in Savannah, Georgia, until the end of the war. While this thesis is designed primarily to be descriptive rather than analytical, a Civil War regimental history must include elements of state and local history, military history, and political history. A small contribution in these areas is attempted.

The following primary sources from the Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library were used extensively: A. A. Rigby Diary, Amasa Allen Civil War Letters, Ezra W. Webb Papers, Diary of Levi L. Hoag in the Katherine Gue Leonard Collection, James H. Shanklin Letters, John N. Shedenhalm's Civil War Daybook, 24th Iowa's Infantry Papers, and a Charles Lucas Letter. Besides the above accounts written by members of the 24th Iowa, the Annals of Iowa provided two summary sketches of the 24th. "First Year's Medical History of the Twenty-fourth Iowa," by John F. Ely in Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States - Iowa and "A Soldier's Letters from the Field," by Charles Lucas in

Iowa Historical Record provided valuable information.

Since the majority of the primary sources were recorded by the common soldiers of the 24th Iowa, the regimental history is intended to reflect the view of the men of the ranks whose goal it was to preserve the Union rather than to rise to position of prominence by military successes. Although slower to answer their country's call, they joined at a time of real need. Perhaps Lincoln's third call in 1862, of which the men of the 24th were a part, enlisted as real patriots who served in the main, not for adventure or glory, but out of a deep sense of duty.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been examined and approved.

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PREFACE

The Civil War was America's most dramatic internal conflict. The nation survived the bloody holocaust with the Union preserved, but not without a terrible sacrifice. The struggle has been known by various names since 1865, but perhaps the "War Between the States" is most descriptive of the way the armies, both North and South, met on the field of battle. "Johnny Reb" and "Billy Yank" volunteered in regiments raised in their home states among friends and relatives.

Civil War historiography is enhanced by the large number of regimental histories available. The story of these small fighting units, numbering approximately 1,000 men, mirrors the views, aspirations, and loyalties of the common soldiers and their states and communities. Two types of regimental histories have been written, each with its deficiencies and virtues.

First generation narratives written by the participants, generally without any use of official materials, are often intriguing but, unless recently reprinted, not usually in wide circulation. Second generation compilations, written with full access to official documents, provide a more studied approach but naturally lack the familiarity of one who had actually participated.

The present writer has attempted in this study to provide a clearer view of what motivated one particular Iowa regiment's members to give up their civilian pursuits for a life as a soldier. The record

of camp life and the shock of battle are recorded as well as the changes in mind and mood.

The record of Iowa soldiers and Iowa regiments is sketchy at best. Many regiments suffer from a lack of any formal history, and few second generation accounts have been attempted. A history of the 24th Iowa is a small attempt to tell the story of an apparently uniquely organized temperance regiment, and in the process, to shed some light on the role of Iowa's common soldier in the Civil War.

The writer owes an unpayable debt of gratitude to all those who assisted him in writing the history of the 24th Iowa. Dr. William Burton, who serving as advisor, helped in topic selection and guided the writer in the gathering of the regiment's fragmented record. The staff of the Iowa State Department of Archives and History gave selflessly of their time and is gratefully acknowledged. A special thanks is due Dr. John Werner and Dr. Larry Balsamo, who provided the necessary criticism and assistance through the trying period of composition. The complete thesis was read and commented on by them.

Finally my family deserves much of the credit for the final completion of the thesis. Both my parents and in-laws provided generously of their hospitality during numerous and extended stays from home. My wife, Shirley, who endured three long summers of research and writing, did most of the typing and proofreading of several rough drafts. Her moral support and encouragement kept the project alive to completion.

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Chapter 1

IOWA AND THE COMING OF THE CIVIL WAR

On April 15, 1861, President Lincoln made his first call for troops. The governors of the loyal states were summoned to send 75,000 militiamen to serve for three months. The slim hope of compromise had disappeared on April 12, 1861, with the firing on Fort Sumter. Since the 1860 elections, war fervor had been growing, and now it burned across the land. In the large eastern cities mass Union meetings turned out crowds numbering over 50,000. In the southern cities similar meetings were being held to support secession.¹

States responded to the president's call for troops in character with their loyalties. Secretary of War Simon Cameron hurriedly assigned quotas to the states and wired the governors to assemble the men at designated points. Cameron wanted one regiment, 37 officers and 743 men, from the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, Arkansas, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota; two regiments each from Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Tennessee; three from Virginia; four each from New Jersey, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri; six from Indiana and Illinois; thirteen from Ohio; sixteen from Pennsylvania; and seventeen from New York. He

¹Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years, Vol. II: The War Years, 1861-1864, Dell Publishing Co., Inc. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1939), p. 67.

assigned no quota to Kansas, Oregon, California, or the District of Columbia. Governors John Ellis of North Carolina, Henry Rector of Arkansas, Isham Harris of Tennessee, and John Letcher of Virginia, refused to comply with Lincoln's request. Instead, these southern governors called conventions to speed secession. The border state governors, William Burton of Delaware, Claiborne Jackson of Missouri, Beriah Magoffin of Kentucky, and Thomas Hicks of Maryland, gave evasive or indignant replies. The northern states that had carried Lincoln into office responded with offers of more troops than the War Department was willing or able to accept.²

Western governors were especially anxious to respond to the president's call for troops. Within three days after Lincoln's appeal, Governor Oliver Morton of Indiana had sent off one regiment and was requesting the acceptance of six more.³ Governor Alexander Randall of Wisconsin sent a wire to Cameron demanding a bigger quota because Illinois had been granted six regiments. In Illinois the General Assembly had already increased the state's total by authorizing the creation of ten regiments. Perhaps the western governor caught most unprepared for the president's announcement was Samuel Kirkwood of Iowa.⁴

²U. S. War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, prepared under the direction of the Secretary of War, by Bvt. Lt. Col. Robert N. Scott, Third U. S. Artillery (70 vols., Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. III, Vol. I, pp. 68-9 (hereinafter referred to as Official Records); William B. Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, Inc., 1948), pp. 146-48.

³Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors, p. 153.

⁴Henry Colin Campbell, ed., Wisconsin in Three Centuries, 1634-1905 (New York: The Century History Company, 1906), Vol. III, p. 161; Victor Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1966), p. 2.

The message carrying Iowa's assigned quota was wired to Davenport, then the only point in Iowa reached by telegraph. To avoid delay, Congressman William Vandever volunteered to carry the message by train to Iowa City, some sixty miles away, where Governor Kirkwood lived. When Mr. Vandever arrived at the Kirkwood farm, he found the governor in boots and overalls, caring for his livestock. After reading the dispatch the governor exclaimed, "The President wants a whole regiment of men! Do you suppose, Mr. Vandever, I can raise that many?" However, Kirkwood had Iowa's regiment ready in two weeks and was urging the government to take more troops.⁵

Iowa in 1861 was, in many ways, still part of the frontier. A part of the territory of the United States since the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Iowa had not been a state fifteen years when the Civil War began. Early settlement was slow compared to her neighbors (see Table 1).

Table 1
Census Report

States	1840	1850	1860
Illinois	476,183	851,470	1,711,951
Iowa	43,112	192,214	674,913
Minnesota	-----	6,077	172,123
Missouri	383,702	682,044	1,182,012
Wisconsin	30,945	305,391	775,881

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 13.

⁵John E. Briggs, Enlistments from Iowa During the Civil War. Vol. II of Iowa and War, ed. by Benj. F. Shambaugh (24 vols.; Iowa City,

In 1833, after the Black Hawk War, the Iowa Territory was officially open to settlers. Many small farmers from Missouri and Kentucky began to arrive at Keokuk, the southernmost riverport. Although the Missouri Compromise of 1820 had made slavery illegal in the territory of Iowa, the majority of these early settlers were sympathetic to the institution of slavery, even if they were not economically able to support it. Other free states which bordered the slave states, such as Illinois, had gone through a similar pattern of settlement, and like Iowa, they would all suffer an internal conflict when the war began. While loyalty to the Union was strong among these early settlers, their southern heritage made them critical of anyone who promoted abolition.⁶

The Sauk and Fox Indian concession of 1842 opened the interior of Iowa to settlement, and settlers began arriving in large numbers at the new riverport cities of Burlington, Davenport, and Dubuque. This new wave of immigration came primarily from the North. Down the Ohio River and then up the Mississippi on steamboats piled high with their possessions, farmers from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and New England came to make their fortunes. Statehood was granted in 1846 to offset the entrance of Florida as a slave state into the Union. Like most western states, Iowa also received a large influx of settlers from Europe, primarily Germany.⁷

Iowa; The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1917-19), pp. 1-2 (hereinafter referred to as Iowa and War); Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors, p. 152.

⁶Edith Wasson McElroy, Years of Valor (Des Moines, Iowa: The Iowa Civil War Commission, 1969), p. 13.

⁷Cyrenus Cole, Iowa Through the Years (Iowa City, Iowa: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1940), pp. 212-13; Leland L. Sage, A History of Iowa (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1974), p. 92.

The settlers moved into the interior along the four major railroad lines. The first railroads reached Iowa in 1854, and by 1856, two-hundred-forty-six miles of track had been laid. The new residents' principal crop was spring wheat, often yielding twenty-five to thirty-five bushels per acre, and selling from \$1.10 to \$1.35 per bushel. The crops from forty acres would often yield enough to pay the price of an additional one-hundred-sixty acres of land.⁸

As the settlers moved west across the state, so did the location of the state capital. Located first at Burlington on the Mississippi River, the capital was moved to Iowa City in 1841. It was finally located in Des Moines, closer to the geographical center of the state, in 1857. While steamboats were navigating the Des Moines River to the capital, the railroad did not yet connect the new seat of government with Iowa City. Therefore, the winter transfer to the new site had to be made by bobsled to a temporary structure on the outskirts of Des Moines.⁹

Iowa's frontier status was further indicated by her persistent Indian problems. When Iowa became a state in 1846, only the Sioux Indians retained possession of their tribal lands in Iowa. In 1851, a treaty for these lands was signed. Many Sioux tribes did not respect the treaty, and occasionally a roving band would return to the state to hunt, farm, trade, or steal. The conflict between the state's expanding white population and the nomadic Indian bands culminated in violence in

⁸Benjamin F. Gue, History of Iowa from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century, Vol. I: The Pioneer Period (New York: The Century History Company, 1903), p. 285. Hereinafter referred to as History of Iowa.

⁹Ibid., p. 351.

1857. The Spirit Lake Massacre, in which thirty-two whites were slain, denoted the dangers of settlement on Iowa's frontier. The Sioux continued to harrass the Iowa settlers until the outbreak of the Civil War. Angered by the loss of valuable land in the 1851 treaty, the Sioux bands, loosely organized under Little Crow, struck the frontier states of Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin, in 1862. While the states were forwarding troops to fight in the east, the Sioux attacked settlements along the Minnesota River Valley, killing over 400 whites. The resulting Indian War in the Northwest was an interesting footnote in the Civil War.¹⁰

The New Ulm Massacre in Minnesota on August 17, 1862, sent settlers fleeing to frontier towns and army posts for safety. Authorities of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and the Dakota and Nebraska Territories were thrown into a state of panic. While settlers fled to the major frontier cities, Iowa commissioned Lt. Colonel James Sawyer to command a Northern Border Brigade of five volunteer companies to defend Iowa's northern border. The Dakota Territory also raised five companies, but the Nebraska Territory had too wide a frontier to defend, and no troops were available. Edward Saloman, the governor of Wisconsin, wrote Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, seeking arms and ammunition. Minnesota's Governor Alexander Ramsey organized a force of nearly 1,400 men, mostly of unmustered soldiers of the Sixth Minnesota, under Colonel Henry Sibley.¹¹

The federal government responded to the crisis by forming the

¹⁰Sage, A History of Iowa, pp. 72, 107-108, 155-56.

¹¹Robert Huhn Jones, The Civil War in the Northwest (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), pp. 23-36.

Department of the Northwest under Major General John Pope, banished as a result of the second Battle of Bull Run. Pope was charged with ending the Indian uprisings and protecting settlers and immigrants in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and the Territories of Dakota and Nebraska. He found success in this department and removed the menace of the Sioux until the end of the Civil War.¹²

The southern border of Iowa was also a constant concern of the state government throughout the war. Although no Civil War battle was fought on Iowa soil, the threat of invasion from the slave-owning Missourians was real. Due to the heritage of early Iowa settlers, especially in southern Iowa, a great deal of sympathy for the South existed in the state's southern counties. Open aid to runaway slaves by other Iowans caused feelings to run high along the border before and during the war. The state was forced to keep a Southern Brigade under Colonel John Edwards to prevent invasion and to maintain order. Two invasion attempts by organized Missourians in July and August of 1861, were halted by a show of force, but atrocities continued as late as 1864 when a dozen members of the Missouri Guards rode into Davis county, robbing, murdering, and looting.¹³

Of more concern to Governor Kirkwood than either of the borders was the "fifth column" activities of a secret group called the Knights of the Golden Circle. Composed mainly of Peace Democrats, and commonly referred to as Copperheads, the Knights opposed the draft, encouraged desertion, and supported a peaceful end to the war. Dennis A. Mahony,

¹²Ibid., pp. xi-xvi.

¹³McElroy, Years of Valor, pp. 183-86.

editor of the Dubuque Herald, was the leader of public opposition to Lincoln's administration until his arrest. Mahony was arrested at his home on August 14, 1862, and taken to Washington where he was imprisoned until November 11, 1862, when he was released without trial or even formal charges. The bitter denunciation of the Republican administration in his newspaper, charging gross violations of the constitution and civil and military officers with infamous crimes, was no doubt the cause of his arrest. As a result of Mahony's arrest, the Copperhead movement was forced underground in Iowa, but the more secret Knights of the Golden Circle continued to be very active in the state's southern counties.¹⁴

Other midwestern states, including Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, also had active Knight organizations. The Copperheads' activities were generally overlooked by the midwestern governors unless it was politically advantageous. Although the Knights were denounced by the War Democrats, midwestern governors, like Oliver Morton of Indiana and Richard Yates of Illinois, used the Copperhead organization as an excuse to appoint and promote good Republican army officers. Governor Kirkwood followed their lead but was forced to take more positive action when, on August 1, 1863, a group of Peace Democrats, led by George Tally, paraded through the Unionist town of South English. A riot ensued, and Tally was killed. His followers threatened vengeance on the town as they retreated. Governor Kirkwood rushed eleven companies of home guard to the scene and arrested twelve of Tally's followers, an action

¹⁴Gue, History of Iowa, Vol. II, pp. 85-87.

which restored order.¹⁵

The loyalties of the majority of the citizens of Iowa were shown clearly in the election of 1860. The Republicans carried every major office, and Lincoln defeated Douglas 70,118 to 55,639 votes, with Bell and Breckinridge each receiving less than 2,000 votes. In January, 1861, Governor Kirkwood visited the president-elect at Springfield, Illinois. The governor stated that Iowans were disturbed over the present situation in the nation, and they would never consent to the dissolution of the Union.¹⁶

In the spring of 1861, Iowa was in a poor position to back up the claim of support that her governor had offered Lincoln in January. There was not a single unit of the regular army stationed within the borders of the state. The nearest arsenal was at St. Louis, Missouri, nearly a week from Davenport by river. Of the two-thousand muskets and rifles sent by the federal government to the state in the past decade, many weapons were worn out and scattered about the state in the custody of local militia units. Artillery was limited to four or five old brass cannon. Although lacking in equipment and training, Iowans were ready to show their support in numbers.¹⁷

On April 17, 1861, Governor Kirkwood issued a proclamation calling for the raising of a regiment of men to rendezvous at Keokuk, Iowa, by May 20, 1861. Within twenty-four hours more than a regiment

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 187-89; Frank L. Klement, The Copperheads in the Middle West (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 25, 30.

¹⁶Sage, A History of Iowa, p. 147; Hesselstine, Lincoln and the War Governors, p. 118.

¹⁷Shambaugh, Iowa and War, Vol. II, pp. 3-4.

of men had volunteered, and the patriotic fever which swept across Iowa, within ten days, filled two more regiments with hundreds of men still seeking admittance to the ranks. Within two weeks the First Iowa Infantry Regiment was ready to march, but it lacked guns, ammunition, and uniforms. The governor wrote the War Department for equipment. Kirkwood claimed he could raise 10,000 men, but he could not arm them. The gravity of the financial situation convinced the governor that immediate legislative action was needed, and he called a special session of the state General Assembly to convene in Des Moines, the new state capital, on May 15, 1861. A bond issue for \$800,000 was passed by the legislature, and Iowa's financial crisis was relieved.¹⁸

Governor Kirkwood had no experience in military affairs at the beginning of the war. He was most fortunate in the appointment of Nathaniel B. Baker as Adjutant-General. A graduate of Harvard College and a former governor of New Hampshire, General Baker showed a genius for military administration and gave brilliant service throughout the war. Although a Democrat, Baker was an outspoken, vigorous supporter of the war. Baker brought much needed organization to the incoming volunteers and throughout the war, remained a model of system and efficiency.¹⁹ "Baker's talents made a valuable supplement to Kirkwood's energy. Together they almost overcame Iowa's lack of resources."²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., p. 22; S. H. M. Byers, Iowa in War Times (Des Moines, Iowa: W. D. Condit & Co., 1888), pp. 47-49.

¹⁹Gue, History of Iowa, Vol. II, pp. 61-64.

²⁰Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors, pp. 174-75. Hesseltine feels Iowa's Kirkwood was the most harassed of all the war governors. The only bright spot in the Iowa scene was the state's adjutant general.

On May 3, 1861, President Lincoln called for 82,000 more men, and Iowa responded with six additional regiments. After the First Battle of Bull Run, Iowa responded to the call of July 23, 1861, with another six regiments. In October, 1861, by supplying four more regiments, Iowa brought its total to seventeen. The Eighteenth Iowa was organized by special order of the War Department in May of 1862. Meanwhile, Iowa men were enlisting in the cavalry, the artillery, and Navy, and Marine Corps.²¹

The call of July 2, 1862, for 300,000 additional troops for the Union saw a marked decline in enlistments in Iowa. Farmers were preparing for the fall harvest, and the war had lost its glamour. In the southern counties the Knights of the Golden Circle, sympathetic to the southern cause, were discouraging enlistments. When the president ordered a draft in 1862 to be used when volunteers could not be secured, Iowans volunteered in growing numbers to avoid the disgrace of being drafted. Iowa's quota was fixed at 10,570 men, and the state responded with 24,438 enlistments. Twenty-two Iowa regiments of infantry were raised by November, 1862, and Iowa had not yet resorted to the draft or substitution. Iowa had been credited with an excess of 13,897 enlistments and, therefore, avoided the draft in January, 1863, when her quota was set at 12,616. Finally in the autumn of 1864, unable to meet the quota of July 18, 1864, with volunteers, approximately 4,000 men were drafted.²²

²¹Jacob A. Swisher, Iowa in Times of War (Iowa City, Iowa: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1943), pp. 80-81.

²²Shambaugh, Iowa and War, Vol. II, p. 22.

The Forty-first, Forty-second, and Forty-third Iowa Infantry Regiments were not yet fully recruited at the end of the war. Five regiments of 100 day volunteers were formed during the last months of the war. Iowa infantry regiments totalled forty-eight at the war's end, plus nine regiments of cavalry, and four batteries of artillery. A regiment of Negroes, made up largely of Iowa men, was first known as the First Iowa Colored Infantry and later designated as the Sixtieth United States Regiment of African Descent. Many Iowans served with troops from other states, and about eight-hundred enlisted in the Navy.²³ Iowa was credited with 76,309 enlistments. More than one half of Iowa's male population of military age bore arms, a credible record, but one not above the average when compared with other western states (see Table 2).

Table 2
Percentage of Military Population
Furnished by States

States	Percent Furnished
Illinois	69.1
Indiana	74.3
Iowa	54.7
Kansas	72.0
Michigan	54.4
Minnesota	60.7
Missouri	46.8
Wisconsin	60.5

Source: William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War* (Albany, New York: Albany Publishing Co., 1889), p. 536.

²³Swisher, Iowa in Times of War, p. 89.

Iowa, however, did more than contribute men to the fighting lines. On the home front Iowa provided leadership behind the lines. The equipping of volunteers was a community responsibility. Each community had its Soldiers Aid Society whose members sewed, knitted, prepared bandages, and raised money to purchase sanitary stores. Women, who served as Sanitary Commission agents, saw that Iowa boys received proper care and treatment.²⁴

Early in the war, the U. S. Sanitary Commission was organized in New York. With the object of giving aid to the troops, the movement spread rapidly. Sanitary fairs, where objects of every kind were sold in a Civil War version of today's rummage sale, were held to raise money. At first, Iowa's contribution went to the New York organization. But to keep the supplies closer to home and of direct benefit to Iowa soldiers, the Iowa Sanitary Commission was formed with Annie Wittenmyer of Keokuk as its president.²⁵

Mrs. Wittenmyer was a prosperous widow in her thirties when the Civil War began. Financially independent, a cold-eyed executive with boundless energy, she became one of Iowa's Civil War heroines. She established the first diet kitchen for field hospitals and generally improved conditions of the sick and wounded in many military hospitals. She won President Lincoln's support and became a close friend of General Grant and his wife.²⁶

Governor Kirkwood chose not to run for a third term in 1863, and

²⁴McElroy, Years of Valor, pp. 225-29.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 225-29.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 225-29.

William M. Stone won the Republican nomination. Stone was elected by a landslide. He had been captured at Shiloh, and after his exchange, he served as Colonel of the Twenty-second Iowa Infantry until wounded at Vicksburg and ordered home. "A less able man than Kirkwood, his administration was even more popular."²⁷

Many Iowa men were to win positions of high command during the Civil War. The state furnished four major generals, thirteen brevet major generals, six brigadier generals, and thirty-six brevet brigadier generals. No less notable was the valor of the soldiers in the ranks. Iowa regiments were prominent in many important battles of the war. Iowa troops fought in the Battle of Wilson's Creek in Missouri, Pea Ridge in Arkansas, and at Fort Donelson in Tennessee. In the Battle of Shiloh, in proportion to her population, Iowa was represented by more men than any other state. Iowa regiments fought in the Battle of Chattanooga in Tennessee, at Vicksburg and Corinth in Mississippi, along the Red River in Louisiana, and they marched with Sherman to the sea. Three regiments, the 22nd, 24th, and 28th fought with General Phil Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley and with the Army of the Potomac in Virginia. Many troops died of disease and starvation in Andersonville and other southern prisons. Twenty-seven Iowans won the Congressional Medal of Honor.²⁸

Iowa's contribution to the Civil War was great, but the recorded history of her men and their regiments is sparse. Unfortunately the

²⁷Ibid., p. 129.

²⁸Ibid., p. 193. Many of Iowa's officers held "breveted" or temporary commissions which were taken away after the war. The title was retained by many, but it was purely honorary.

records of many of the most active and involved regiments have never been more than summarily recorded. In Regimental Publications & Personal Narratives of the Civil War, a Checklist, compiled by C. E. Dornbusch, the state of Iowa stands out markedly as lacking in published regimental histories. Thirteen infantry regiments have no listed publications, and only seventeen have an official history listed.²⁹ One of the most interesting infantry regiments to see service from Iowa, the "Twenty-fourth Regiment of Iowa Volunteer Infantry," has little in the way of a formal written history. Although the 24th was a battle-tested regiment of both the western and eastern theaters of the Civil War, it has no known published regimental history. Summary sketches often describe the role of the 24th Iowa as viewed by the regiments that fought with it.

A great deal has been written about the larger organizations of the army such as: brigades, divisions, or army corps, and the generals who commanded these units. Biographies, diaries, letter collections, and various personal narratives have also been collected and published since 1865. Bell Wiley's two descriptions of the common soldier in The Life of Billy Yank and The Life of Johnny Reb, and Fred Shannon's two volume study, The Organization of the Union Army, have become standard works. These two authors have succeeded in taking the many anonymous accounts of the war by soldiers and in making a general overall assessment of the life and army conditions during the Civil War.

A study of a particular state such as Victor Hicken's Illinois in the Civil War, or a particular unit study such as John Pullen's The

²⁹C. E. Dornbusch, Regimental Publications & Personal Narratives of the Civil War, Vol. I: Northern States (New York: The New York Public Library, 1962), pp. 16-35.

Twentieth Maine, however, soon impress upon the reader that, while many of the generalizations about soldiers' lives and attitudes hold true, there is a uniqueness that soon develops around each regiment. These organized fighting units, largely made up of volunteers from a particular community within a state, in many ways mirror the views and attitudes of those left behind.

The regiment was the basic fighting unit around which both the North and South organized their armies. The majority of regiments were raised by the individual states, and the units were designated by a number and the state name: 56th Ohio, 47th Indiana, 33rd Illinois, or the 24th Iowa. The North raised the equivalent of 2,047 regiments during the war, of which 1,692 were infantry, 272 were cavalry, and 78 were artillery batteries. While the data on the South is less complete, an estimated 1,009 Confederate regiments were organized. Although the regiment was the basic unit of both the cavalry and the artillery batteries, the infantry regiments were the backbone of both the Union and Confederate armies. Since the federal government's regular army numbered only nine infantry regiments in 1861, the infantry volunteers who poured into the Union army were organized separately with a maximum authorized strength of 1,025 men and a minimum of 825 men.³⁰ After various changes the organization of the volunteer infantry regiments was defined on September 6, 1862, as follows:

³⁰Mark Mayo Boatner III, The Civil War Dictionary (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959), pp. 610-13.

Infantry³¹

Regiment of infantry (ten companies)--one colonel, 1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 major, 1 adjutant (an extra lieutenant), 1 quartermaster (an extra lieutenant), 1 surgeon, 2 assistant surgeons, 1 chaplain, 1 sergeant-major, 1 regimental quartermaster-sergeant, 1 regimental commissary-sergeant, 1 hospital steward; Company of infantry--one captain, 1 first lieutenant, 1 second lieutenant, 1 first sergeant, 4 sergeants, 8 corporals, 2 musicians, 1 wagoner, and 64 privates minimum, 82 privates maximum.

Since it was the practice to organize new regiments instead of using new recruits to replace losses in veteran units, regimental strengths steadily declined.

Thomas Livermore estimated the average regimental strengths of the Union Army as 560 at Shiloh in 1862, but the regiments averaged only 305 men in Sherman's army in May, 1864. Only the state of Wisconsin had an official policy for regimental recruit replacement. The governors of other northern states found it politically more advantageous to form new regiments, granting officer commissions to prominent and influential citizens, rather than replacing troop losses in older units. As a result, smaller army units were jumbled together to try to keep the total strength accurate. With the progress of the war and the decline of actual numbers in regiments, brigades originally numbering four regiments would sometimes contain six to ten regiments to maintain the same total manpower from the brigade level upward.³²

³¹Fred Albert Shannon, The Organization and Administration of the Union Army 1861-1865, Vol. II (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1928), pp. 270-72. Hereinafter referred to as Organization of the Union Army.

³²Thomas L. Livermore, Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America 1861-65 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1901), p. 68; Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, pp. 610-13; Bruce Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1951), p. 190; Bell I. Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank (Indianapolis, Inc.: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1952), p. 320.

Because regiments were seldom broken up or provided with systematic recruit replacements, the regiments figured prominently in the soldiers' loyalties. The men got a sense of identity and belonging to this small fighting unit which had been raised in their home state and was made up of their friends and neighbors.³³

Although a great number of regimental histories have been written, most were written shortly after the war by the participants themselves. In recent years many regimental histories have been published by contemporary historians with full access to official records and primary sources, not available to the earlier writers. Each type of history has deficiencies and virtues, but each aids in making a more complete picture of America's greatest internal struggle.

A history of the 24th Iowa would give the reader a clearer understanding of Iowa's role in the Civil War and the Iowa soldier who served. While the 24th displayed its own uniqueness in its temperance organization and its wide range of battlefields, the regiment can also be viewed as "typical" in many respects. There were religious regiments from other states, and Iowa had other regiments organized around some special ideal or ethnic origin. While few Iowa regiments served on as wide a range of battle fronts and under the number of commanders or in as many campaigns as the 24th Iowa, nearly all, at one time or another, served with the 24th. The history of the 24th Iowa, therefore, might well serve as a case study of other Iowa regiments in general.

In a history describing the experience of the men who served in the 24th Iowa, the common experiences of the volunteers from Iowa will

³³Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, p. 320.

be told. Although this thesis is designed to be primarily descriptive rather than analytical, a Civil War regimental history must include elements of state and local history, military history, and political history. A small contribution in these areas is attempted.

Since the majority of the primary sources were recorded by the common soldiers of the 24th Iowa, the regimental history is intended to reflect the view of the men of the ranks whose goal it was to preserve the Union rather than to rise to a position of prominence by military successes. Few of the volunteers had any military background; most were native born Americans, and the majority knew little of the world outside their own farming communities. These soldiers who volunteered for the 24th, generally, had not been caught up in the wave of enthusiasm that marked Lincoln's first call for volunteers.

Although slower to answer their country's call, they joined at a time of real need. Their eyes were open, as many knew personally, from accounts given by friends who had returned crippled and maimed, that war was not all glory. Perhaps Lincoln's third call in 1862, of which the men of the 24th were a part, enlisted as real patriots who served in the main, not for adventure or glory, but out of a deep sense of duty.

Chapter 2

ORGANIZATION OF THE "TEMPERANCE REGIMENT"

On July 2, 1862, President Lincoln called for 300,000 additional men. The hope of an end to the war in 1862 had fallen steadily after the bloody Battle of Shiloh and the tardy progress of the Peninsula Campaign. Although the recruiting system, which had been abolished in April, was re-established in June, little recruiting took place. After the disastrous Seven Days' Battles, the president proclaimed that a specific number of troops were needed, and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton assigned each state a quota. The tone of the order was optimistic, claiming a speedy conclusion to the war if the states responded quickly.¹

The governors of the loyal states responded favorably to the president's request for troops, but they were pessimistic as to the speed with which the recruits could be raised. Filling this call did not seem very promising when men were weary of war and no longer attracted by the prospect of a great adventure which might be over before they could enlist. In 1861, the governors had complained that they were not asked for enough men; now they thought Stanton had set the quotas too high.²

¹Official Records, Ser. II, Vol. II, pp. 187-88; Shannon, Organization of the Union Army, pp. 268-70.

²Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors, p. 202.

The Secretary of War had fixed Iowa's quota at 10,570. Governor Kirkwood wrote Secretary Stanton that Iowa would do her duty but that fall harvesting would prevent rapid recruiting. On July 9, 1862, Kirkwood issued an urgent appeal of his own, saying that the fate of the Union depended on the prompt enlistment of all who could serve. Those too young or too old to join the army, and even women if necessary, must take over gathering the harvest while the able-bodied joined the army. If the desired number of men did not respond, it would be necessary to resort to a draft.³

Governor Hamilton Gamble of Missouri had threatened a state draft in August, 1861, and then Secretary of War Cameron had prevented Kirkwood from carrying out a similar proposal in September, 1861. Now in 1862, with almost all of the governors reporting that recruiting was slow and demanding a bounty, the threat of a draft seemed a viable alternative. The governor made the suggestion that the national government take the responsibility for the draft to help offset the political consequences in upcoming elections.⁴

³Official Records, Ser. III, Vol. II, p. 206; Iowa, Messages and Proclamations of Governors of Iowa, ed. Benjamin F. Shambaugh (Iowa City, Iowa: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1903), pp. 497-98.

⁴Shannon, Organization of the Union Army, Vol. I, p. 273; Hesselstine, Lincoln and the War Governors, pp. 201-02. The threat of the draft and the promise of the bounty proved effective in all the Western states except Wisconsin where there were draft riots. The stigma of having to resort to a draft to fill the state quota shocked the patriotic leaders in the states on a local level. To avoid drafting their citizens, cities, counties, and states began to offer bounties in excess of one hundred dollars provided to volunteers by the federal government. The supervisors of Clinton County, Iowa, paid a bounty of seventy-five dollars to every resident volunteer; while in Johnson County, Iowa, the bounty was only fifty dollars. But \$43,275 had been spent by December 1, 1862. Of all the inducements, bounties were probably the most effective.

With the prospect of a draft facing Iowa unless her quota was filled, Governor Kirkwood received on July 10, 1862, a letter from Eber Byam, a Methodist Episcopal minister at Mount Vernon, Iowa, offering a partial solution to the enlistment problem. Reverend Byam proposed to raise a strictly temperance regiment, called perhaps the "Temperance Zouaves." The following day Byam sent the governor a glowing letter, promising to raise a better regiment, in less time, than Colonel Vandever had with the Ninth Iowa Infantry, or he, Byam, would pay all the expense. Reverend Byam went on to list the reasons he was so confident he could raise a regiment:

The religious element of the state cannot be moved to volunteer as effectively, in any other way.

1st There are hundreds of this class who refuse to enlist because they cannot bear the idea of being appointed with an ungodly rabble.

2nd A still larger number, refuse to enlist as soldiers, to fight for their country, & then be treated like dogs, by a christless--wicked & (more than likely) drunken set of officers from Col. down to Corporal.

3rd Scores of parents have said to me within the last few months, that they would not refuse to let their son volunteer in such a regiment, as the one I propose to raise--but they would never consent to have them join any other kind.

Byam conceded that he had no real military qualifications to head such a regiment, but he was fully confident he could succeed. "I will demonstrate, both to you & the world, that a man may be a Christian gentleman, & a good soldier. And that a minister can fight as well as pray." He closed his letter by requesting the governor to make his commission public in the Chicago Tribune or Chicago Journal so that if he was absent from home he could receive notice of it.⁵

⁵Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Miscellaneous Civil War Correspondence, 1862, Letter,

Governor Kirkwood, "a good old Methodist," responded to Reverend Byam's request on August 6, 1862.⁶

The Secretary of War has authorized me to raise a regiment of Infantry in this state for the United States Service to be known as the "Temperance Regiment" to be commanded by you. This Regiment is in addition to the five regiments heretofore called for. I therefore request and authorize you to proceed immediately to the raising and organization of such regiment. The regiment will be the 24th Iowa Infantry and will rendezvous at Muscatine. Recruiting commissions will be issued to you by the Adjutant General for such persons as you may designate as recruiting officers and for the recruits to the place rendezvous, an acting quartermaster will be appointed by me to make the necessary arrangement at Muscatine for quartering and subsisting the men as they arrive. I shall expect the regiment to be in rendezvous by the 15th of Sept.⁷

Governor Kirkwood also apparently complied with Byam's request to make the appointment public in the Chicago Tribune or Chicago Journal.

Temperance Regiments

The formation of regiments of strictly moral and temperate men is one of the novel and meritorious features of the rebellion. Strenuous efforts are being made to form one in this State, and we are gratified to learn from a correspondent [of the Chicago Journal] that, by authority of the Secretary of War, Governor Kirkwood of Iowa, has ordered and commissioned Colonel E. C. Byam, of Mt. Vernon, to raise (as the 24th Iowa Infantry) a regiment to be entitled 'The Iowa Temperance Regiment,' to be composed of strictly temperance men, with as much moral power as can possibly be concentrated in a thousand persons. In this respect it closely resembles the character designated by the Good Templars of Illinois in forming their regiment.

E. C. Byam to Governor S. J. Kirkwood, July 10, 1862. Hereinafter referred to as Miscellaneous Correspondence. Original spelling and punctuation will be retained in all citations from letters, diaries, and other documentary sources.

⁶Surgeon John F. Ely, "First Year's Medical History of the Twenty-fourth Iowa," in War Sketches and Incidents, Vol. I, compiled by Iowa Commandry, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (Des Moines, Iowa: Press of D. C. Kenyon, 1893), p. 1. Hereinafter referred to as Ely, War Sketches.

⁷Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Twenty-fourth Regiment of Infantry Civil War Correspondence, Letter, Governor S. J. Kirkwood to E. C. Byam, August 6, 1862. Hereinafter referred to as 24th Ia. Correspondence.

To those who desire the highest morality should be found in every commissioned officer--parents, wives, sisters who wish their children, husbands, and brothers to go into a regiment commanded by Christian men, and free from the vices so prevalent in regiments of a different in these organizations, their moral status only differing.

We are much in favor of the new style of going to war and deem it worthy of encouragement. The usual habits of soldiers will be far less likely to be contracted, and he who leaves home without those faults, and goes with the Temperance Regiment will be apt to return home as pure as when he left. The temptations of army life will be kept from the camp as rigidly as are spies.⁸

The idea of a religious regiment was not typical in the Union Army, but its organization was not unique. The 73rd Illinois was organized by a Methodist minister and contained so many parsons that it was nicknamed the "Preacher's Regiment." Illinois, in fact, was credited with two Preacher's Regiments; Reverend Jessee Moore organized the 115th Illinois. Regiments and companies were also formed along racial, occupational, or national lines. Many of the western regiments were known as "German" regiments. Scores of companies and regiments bore the name Zouave in honor of the valiant French Zouaves. Many attempted to copy the Zouaves' picturesque uniform of baggy trousers and brightly colored blouses, red predominating. A regiment of "Temperance Zouaves" as Reverend Byam first proposed might well have made the 24th Iowa unique.⁹

With his newly acquired commission Colonel Byam immediately began to recruit his temperance regiment. Commissioners of companies were appointed and sent to canvass Cedar, Linn, and Jones counties in east central Iowa where Byam had ministered. Circulars were distributed

⁸"Temperance Regiments," Muscatine Daily Journal, August 18, 1862, p. 2.

⁹Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, pp. 7-8; Shannon, Organization of the Union Army, Vol. I, pp. 42-44.

announcing the name and character of the regiment.¹⁰ Meanwhile, in many parts of these counties, companies of volunteers had already been raised. Ads appeared daily in the local papers encouraging men to enlist. Commissioner Stephen Rathbun placed the following ad in The Tipton Advertiser:

NOTICE.

I have been authorized to recruit a company of men for the Regiment of Volunteers to be organized in this Congressional District under the late call of the President for Three Hundred Thousand men. It is to be

A CEDAR COUNTY COMPANY,

And all those intending to join the army should enlist at once. Arrangements have been made for subsisting the men. Headquarters at Tipton Recruiting office in the Post Office building--Come right along.

Each volunteer will receive Twenty-five dollars bounty, being a part of the One Hundred Dollars bounty to be received at the end of the war, a month's advance pay and Two Dollars premium, making

FORTY DOLLARS

In all, to be had immediately upon the mustering in of his Company or so soon as the paymaster arrives in camp.

STEPHEN W. RATHBUN, Captain

Tipton, July 23d, 1862¹¹

One important recruiting aid listed in the above ad was the bonus paid to volunteers. To increase enlistments, in the summer and fall of 1862, Congress authorized a \$2 premium and a month's advance pay of \$13. Secretary of War Stanton had also authorized a \$25 advance to the recruits from the \$100 bounty they were to receive at the end of their service. The federal government, therefore, offered \$40, payable

¹⁰24th Iowa Correspondence, Col. Byam to Adj. Gen. Baker, Aug. 11, 1862. Thad L. Smith, "The Twenty-fourth Iowa Volunteers, From Muscatine to Winchester," Annals of Iowa, A Historical Quarterly (Third Series), Vol. I (April, 1895), p. 15. Hereinafter referred to as Smith, Annals of Iowa. As Wiley points out in The Life of Billy Yank, mass meetings were a standard feature of recruiting and newly signed recruits were put to the task of bringing in others. In Iowa recruiting was often done at Union Meetings held regularly in the small towns to support the war.

¹¹The Tipton Advertiser, July 24, 1862, p. 2.

at the time each volunteer enlisted. The governor of Iowa appealed to the boards of supervisors of the counties to provide additional bounties to encourage enlistment. While some counties offered as much as \$75, this was not the case for most of the men recruited for the Temperance Regiment. They received only the standard \$40 and were nicknamed the "40 dollar boys" by other regiments.¹²

By the middle of August, Colonel Byam and Governor Kirkwood had received petitions to join the Temperance Regiment from many independently organized companies. Accepting independently organized companies was not the normal recruiting procedure. Usually the colonel would receive his commission and then appoint captains to act as his recruiting agents. They, in turn, attempted to raise a company of men. Less often, community leaders would organize companies and then seek a commission from the governor for assignment to a regiment. The Temperance Regiment was recruited by both methods.¹³

The correspondence between Colonel Byam and Governor Kirkwood indicated the Colonel was at first overwhelmed by his new responsibility. To the governor Byam wrote about an understanding he thought existed that would give no authority or encouragement to anyone raising a regiment until his temperance regiment was completed.¹⁴ A day later Byam wrote:

¹²Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors, pp. 197-99; Shannon, Organization of the Union Army, Vol. I, pp. 57-58; Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Civil War Journal of A. A. Rigby, October 28, 1862. Hereinafter referred to as Rigby Journal.

¹³Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, pp. 20-21.

¹⁴Miscellaneous Correspondence, E. C. Byam to Governor S. J. Kirkwood, Aug. 11, 1862.

How many Co. can I have in the 24th? If more than 10 let me know. Can I issue more recruiting commissions than I have companies? Am I compelled to accept any Company commissioned by me even though it does not meet the standards agreed to? Can I have till Sept. 19?¹⁵

By August 18, Colonel Byam was desperate to fill his regiment quickly with the necessary companies. He wrote the governor:

I believe prompt action is necessary because enemies of the enterprise to have a Temperance Regiment are circulating false rumors. Many boys have enlisted because it is to be a Temperance Regiment. All want to be received as volunteers and not be put into Regt. as draftees. When will Camp Strong be ready for us?¹⁶

Several letters were also written to Adjutant General Baker by Byam, concerned with recruiting procedures and with transfers of companies to the "Temperance Regiment."¹⁷

Eventually Colonel Byam selected ten companies from twenty-four offered in central and eastern Iowa.¹⁸ Linn county was represented by three companies commanded by Captains Wilbur C. Dimmitt, Felix W. Vinson, and William Carbee. Captain Vinson was a Methodist minister from Cedar Rapids, and he would be appointed chaplain of the regiment later. Jackson county was represented by two companies, captained by James Martin and Stephen Henderson. Henderson was also a Methodist preacher, and he enlisted his company in the bounds of the circuit he rode. Cedar county also offered two companies. The first of these companies was organized by Captain Stephen W. Rathbun, who was a deputy sheriff in the county.

¹⁵Miscellaneous Correspondence, Col. E. C. Byam to Governor S. J. Kirkwood, Aug. 11, 1862.

¹⁶24th Iowa Correspondence, Col. E. C. Byam to Governor S. J. Kirkwood, Aug. 18, 1862.

¹⁷Ibid., Col. E. C. Byam to Adj. Gen. Baker, Aug. 11, and 15, 1862.

¹⁸Ely, War Sketches, p. 105.

The commander of the other Cedar county company, Silas Johnson, had not been commissioned as a recruiting officer but was elected over commissioners Gue and Pound to head the company. Tama, Jones, and Johnson counties filled out the regiment with one company each. The respective Captains, Leander Clark, James D. Williams, and Jacob B. Casebeer, of these three companies were also Methodist preachers. A. B. Kendig, a Methodist minister at Iowa City, was appointed Lieutenant Colonel, and Ed Wright of Springville, Linn county, who was eventually to rise to the rank of brevet-general, was appointed major. The "Temperance Regiment" was also known as the "Methodist Regiment" because a large number of the officers, including Byam, were Methodist ministers.¹⁹

Although the election of captains and lieutenants by the men of the ranks was common practice, the voting was usually a formality. This appears to have been generally the case in the Temperance Regiment with the designated commissioners being elected company commander. One of the Cedar county companies showed a degree of independence by electing Silas Johnson as captain. However, commissioners Jeremiah Gue and Edwin Pound were elected first and second lieutenant respectively. Election of colonels and majors by company officers was the common method, but it appears that Byam appointed the field and staff officers himself. Governor Kirkwood followed the custom of paying some political debts, not only in choosing Byam to head the regiment, but in appointing two other field officers. When A. B. Kendig, appointed by Byam, could not

¹⁹Lurton Dunham Ingersoll, Iowa and the Rebellion (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincot & Co., 1866), pp. 501-02; Muscatine Daily Journal, Aug. 26, 1862-Sept. 9, 1862, p. 3; Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 105. The 24th Iowa's original captains numbered five ministers and two sons of ministers.

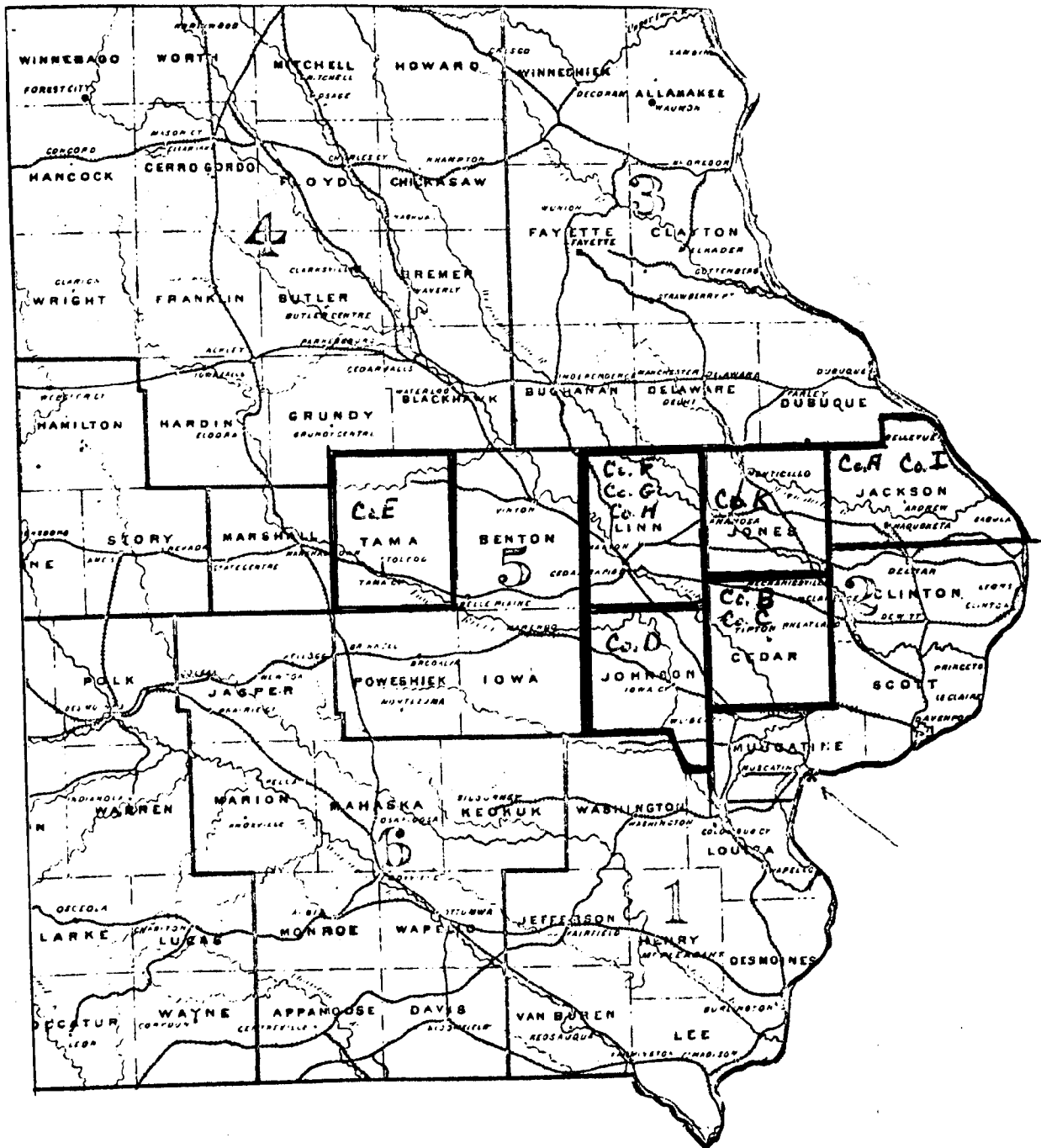


Figure 2.1. Eastern Iowa. Map adapted from "Map of the State of Iowa Showing Judicial Districts," by A. T. Andreas, Chicago, Illinois. The location of the counties where the majority of the 24th Iowa was recruited is outlined, and companies recruited in those counties are indicated. Muscatine, the location of Camp Strong, the 24th Iowa's first camp, is indicated by an arrow.

serve as lieutenant colonel, the governor gave the position to John Q. Wilds, who had been wounded at the Battle of Shiloh. Wilds had been a captain in the 13th Iowa, and returning home on furlough to recover from his wounds, he was elected to the executive committee for the township to organize Union meetings in support of the war. Wilds, then, was a political appointment by the governor who may have felt the untried Byam needed an officer with some military experience as his second in command. The governor also selected Ed Wright as the regiment's major. Wright had been elected to a second term in the Iowa General Assembly from the district where the regiment was being raised. First appointed to the 35th Iowa, Wright was given the 24th Iowa when pressure was brought on Governor Kirkwood to appoint another man to the 35th Iowa. Colonel Byam did reserve the important purchasing position of adjutant for his son, Charles, who was also a wounded veteran of Shiloh. Only the nomination of chaplain was left to the choice of company commanders, with Felix Vinson appointed.²⁰

The ten companies assigned to the Temperance Regiment were ordered into quarters by Governor Kirkwood on dates ranging from August 16 to August 28, 1862. The rendezvous designated in the orders was Camp Strong, Muscatine, Iowa. Joseph A. Green was appointed by the governor as acting quartermaster and commissioned to build twenty barracks in the camp, located on an island in the Mississippi River, about

²⁰Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, p. 24; Muscatine Daily Journal, Aug. 26, 1862-Sept. 9, 1862, p. 3; Mt. Vernon News, Aug. 8, 1862, p. 2, 3; The State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, Gen. Ed Wright Papers, In Memoriam--Gen. E. Wright by Charles L. Longley (hereinafter referred to as Wright's Papers); Miscellaneous Correspondence, Rev. Byam to Adj. Gen. Baker, Aug. 4, 1862; 24th Iowa Correspondence, Col. Byam to Adj. Gen. Baker, Sept. 9, 1862; Asst. Adj. Gen. Watson to Gov. Kirkwood, Sept. 10, 1862.

two miles from the center of the city of Muscatine. Captain Henderson's company arrived first on August 13, 1862, aboard the steamer Bill Henderson. Soon other units arrived, and by the fifth of September, all ten companies were in camp. Most of the recruits came by wagon or on the railroad; a few arrived by steamboat.²¹

The volunteer's first impression of Camp Strong was generally favorable. Corporal Amasa Allen wrote his wife saying, ". . . our barracks which are very good buildings 40 x 20 ft. with four tier of boncks one above the other . . . on an island of 2,700 acres and consists of 26 Barracks. . . ." ²² Private A. A. Rigby, in his journal, described the camp as lacking only good water. ". . . the barracks are made of rough boards nailed perpendicularly. Four rows of Bunks run full length--making very comfortable sleeping quarters. Cookroom is placed in the rear of each building."²³ Cyril Upham, the camp correspondent

²¹Iowa, Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion Together with Historical Sketches of Volunteer Organization 1861-1866, prepared by Brig. Gen. Buy E. Logan, Adjutant General (6 vols. Des Moines: Emory H. English, State Printer, 1910), Vol. III, p. 781 (hereinafter referred to as Roster and Record); Muscatine Daily Journal, Aug. 26, 1862-Sept. 9, 1862, p. 3.

²²Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Letters of Amasa Orlando Allen, Co. I, 24th Iowa Infantry, Letter, Amasa to Agnes, August 31, 1862. Hereinafter referred to as Allen Letters. Amasa Allen enlisted as second corporal of Co. I, Twenty-fourth Iowa Infantry on August 11, 1862 and rose to the rank of first sergeant before his death July 5, 1863 in a hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. Allen, who was twenty-nine when he enlisted, had a wife and two small children with whom he corresponded until his death. While his letters often lack literary grace, they are very descriptive and apparently honest. A few letters of his wife, Agnes, are also included in his letter file. Her letters give insight, not only to the life of the soldier's family while he was away, but to the attitudes about the army and the war held by the people at home.

²³Rigby Journal, Sept. 3, 1862. Private A. A. Rigby enlisted Aug. 7, 1862, was promoted sixth corporal July 1, 1864, and was mustered out with the other members of the 24th Iowa Infantry on July 17, 1865. Rigby was only twenty-one when he enlisted in Company B along with

for the Muscatine Daily Journal, told his readers:

. . . imagine a rough board shanty, without any windows or floor, in which there are erected four rows of bunks, one above the other on each side. In these bunks straw is placed first and then a couple of us tumble in . . . The "grub" . . . is served outdoors on a rough table where all hands convene at stated hours to eat their tough beef and good bread. When I have described one building I have described them all.²⁴

The design and accommodations of the camp seemed better than average by Civil War standards and excellent compared to camps of other regiments in Iowa. The fact that the camp was new and that the planners had the benefit of errors made during the first year of the war, went a long way toward improving conditions at Camp Strong over earlier camps. The new barracks formed a large square. The Temperance Regiment occupied one right angle and the Thirty-fifth Iowa Infantry the other. In the center of the camp was a flag pole and an artillery piece which announced the raising and lowering of the flag. Unlike most mustering camps, Strong was not in the home community of any of the troops but close enough to allow frequent visits by relatives and friends.²⁵

Most of the troops had received a big "send-off" from their home towns and arrived at Muscatine full of enthusiasm and patriotic spirit. Private Rigby wrote that he had entered upon the duties of a soldier,

three cousins. Rigby was a college student before enlisting, and he writes very literately and is very descriptive in his journal entries. With one cousin, a second lieutenant, and another a sergeant, Rigby was often favored with experiences the normal private would not have had.

²⁴Cyril Upham, "Editorial Correspondence from Camp," Muscatine Daily Journal, Aug. 30, 1862, p. 3.

²⁵Shannon, The Organization of the Union Army, Vol. I, p. 198; Muscatine Daily Journal, Aug. 29, 1862, p. 3; Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, p. 24.

and with God's help, he would stay in the path of duty.²⁶ Another Christian soldier, Corporal Amasa Allen, said in an early letter home:

But if it was not for my country give me home where my Wife and little ones can be with me But it is ordered other ways and if I can be spared to return then will I thank the God of Battle. . . you dear Wife pray for my safe return after peace has been restored to our country.²⁷

Sergeant Charles A. Lucas wrote to his brother in a somewhat different vein:

I think I am the only native Belgian in the 24th. I hope the name of Belgium will not be disgraced by me. I often think that the Belgians are descendants of the Nervi, of whom Julius Caesar-- fifty years, B. B. said that they were the hardest men to fight in the world.²⁸

Along with the new recruits' patriotic spirit, ran a fierce pride in their abilities as soldiers. Most companies picked a suitable nickname until they were mustered and assigned a letter. One company from Cedar County was known as the "Tipton Tigers," and a company from Jackson county was labelled the "Excelsior Guards."²⁹ Every man felt his company

²⁶Rigby Journal, Aug. 12, 1862. Rigby was a very pious recruit and worked constantly to improve the religious atmosphere in the regiment. He often wondered how God could be on the side of an Army with so many ungodly officers and leaders.

²⁷Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Aug. 31, 1862.

²⁸Charles A. Lucas, "A Soldier's Letters from the Field," Iowa Historical Record, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (July, 1900), p. 127. Hereinafter referred to as Iowa Historical Record. Lucas enlisted as a second sergeant of Company D, Twenty-fourth Iowa Infantry, on August 16, 1862. He eventually rose to the rank of captain on September 20, 1864, and he was mustered out with the rest of the regiment on July 17, 1865. Lucas, a native of Belgium, had served as sergeant major in the Belgian army. He had emigrated and moved to Iowa with his widowed mother in 1859. His brother, Henry, failed to be mustered for health reasons, and the two brothers corresponded during the war. Lucas' military background and foreign nativity gives the reader a unique frame of reference with which to study the history of the 24th Iowa Infantry.

²⁹Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Pictorial Roster of Soldiers, 1862.

was the best drilled. This generally friendly competition became more serious as mustering into federal service approached, and the companies were assigned letters.

Infantry companies were lettered A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and K. Letter "J" was omitted because of its similarity to letter "I" as a company insignia. "A" was the most coveted letter designation, signifying the color company, and "B" and "C" were the next most important, being the right and left flank unit. According to The Tipton Advertiser, Captain Rathbun's company was assigned the letter "A" originally, but later received the letter "B."³⁰ Rigby reflected the strong feelings on the matter:

The regiment is being organized. Companies have been lettered. Through the villany of someone we have lost our position. Our letter is B. The boys are swearing mad about it and say it was a clerical trick. That all the preachers got together & gambled for A B & C, leaving the rest to make the best of the remaining letters.³¹

Captain Martin had written to the governor, September 6, seeking letter "A" for the captain's company. Governor Kirkwood wrote Colonel Byam saying, "If consistant with claims of other companies in your regt. you will assign Captain Martin's Co. to letter 'A.'" Apparently the claim was not consistent because Captain Martin ended up with letter "I" for his company.³²

Isolated in the training camp, far away from the war, company pride often manifested itself in intense rivalry. Regimental pride and state loyalty, to a large extent, replaced the former company rivalries

³⁰The Tipton Advertiser, Aug. 14, 1862, p. 3.

³¹Rigby Journal, Sept. 5, 1862.

³²Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Letter Book, 1862, Letter, Governor Kirkwood to Col. Byam, Sept. 6, 1862.

as the regiments moved south into the conflict. Letters and diaries began to record the exploits of the "24th" rather those of "Co. B" or the "Excelsior Guards."

All of the turmoil of company position subsided on September 18, 1862, when Captain H. B. Hendershott of the regular army mustered the companies into the service of the United States for three years. The total number of the regiment at the completion of its organization was 979. Mustering in was viewed very critically by Dr. Ely, regimental surgeon. While the mustering officer found about twenty obvious rejections, "about 60 more should have been rejected for these, with various disabilities, were only a burden, and more or less worthless to the service, as their presence had the effect, more or less, of discouraging the rest."³³

Private John Coutts described the mustering procedure:

. . . form on the parade ground in companies the officer took his place ten or twelve paces back from in front of the Company. Orderly commenced to call the roll. Each man was to walk from where he stood straight to the officer, with both hands raised above his head, with the fingers spread out to show all of the hands and fingers. He must also show his teeth as he comes forward, and if he would walk all right and look healthy, the officer would wave him off, and when that was done he was passed all right. There was only one man rejected in my company. He had had a broken leg sometime and this leg was just a trifle shorter but the officer detected the limp first thing, and he said to him, 'Have you had your leg broken?' The answer was 'yes.' 'Well you may go home and raise corn and pork for the army.' So he ordered him off the roll.³⁴

³³Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 107; Roster and Record, Vol. III, p. 781.

³⁴John Coutts, "The Civil War Experiences of John Coutts," The Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), p. 7. Hereinafter referred to as Cedar County Historical Review. John Coutts enlisted as a private in Company C, Twenty-fourth Iowa Infantry on August 11, 1862. He rose to the rank of third corporal before he was mustered out with the rest of the regiment July 17, 1865. Coutts wrote about his life as a Civil War soldier twenty years after the war, but Coutts' reminiscences are

shoots us the laws of war will impose a fine upon him for shooting registered dogs."³⁷ Finally on October 11, the equipment was complete with the distribution of Enfield rifles with sword bayonet. According to Amasa Allen the guns had been captured from the rebels, and "C. S. A." was still marked on the unopened boxes. The weapons weighed about ten pounds.³⁸

Governor Kirkwood worked desperately throughout 1861 and 1862 to secure arms for Iowa regiments. The situation by 1863 was somewhat relieved, but as late as March, 1863, the Governor wrote: "I regard it as a matter of the first and most pressing importance to get a supply of arms and ammunition." Iowa's Adjutant General's Report of January, 1863, indicates a wide variety of arms had been acquired during 1862, including: 1,000 Austrian rifles, .58 caliber; 2,700 short Austrian rifles, .54 caliber; 5,900 Prussian muskets, .72 caliber; 900 Prussian rifled muskets, .69 caliber; and 10,000 Enfield rifles, .58 caliber; all received from New York. Six-hundred Springfield muskets, .69 caliber and 1,000 Garibaldi rifled muskets, .71 caliber were received from St. Louis. Colt's revolvers numbering 1,200 had apparently been acquired to issue to officers.³⁹ On October 3, 1862, Colonel Byam wrote Governor Kirkwood to remind him that the 24th Iowa was to have "Enfields" instead of the

³⁷24th Iowa Correspondence, 1862, Letter, Captain S. H. Henderson, to Adj. Gen. Baker, Aug. 22, 1862; Muscatine Daily Journal, Aug. 28, 1862, p. 2; Rigby Journal, Sept. 25, 1862. In The Life of Billy Yank, Wiley says so-called "dog collars," were made of stiff leather and, while prescribed by army regulations, were rarely worn. The 24th Iowa apparently had to suffer with the restriction during training.

³⁸Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Oct. 12, 1862.

³⁹Shambaugh, Iowa and War, Vol. IV, pp. 14-18; Adjutant General's Report of Iowa: 1863, Vol. I, p. xvi.

Prussian guns. Many Iowa soldiers claimed that the Enfield rifle was the best arm used in the Civil War. The 24th Iowa received 924 Enfield rifles, and on October 14, 1862, Colonel Byam returned 23 revolvers to Adjutant General Baker who had mistakenly sent them for the non-commissioned staff and musicians. The Enfield rifled musket, along with the Springfield, were the standard infantry arm. Muzzle-loading rifles, the Enfield and Springfield, were regarded highly by most Yanks who carried them. The 24th Iowa was as well armed as any Civil War regiment except those few, such as the regiments in Wilder's brigade, which were armed with seven shot, .52 caliber Spencer repeating carbines.⁴⁰

During September and October the men and officers slowly became accustomed to army life. The daily routine usually consisted of roll call at 5 o'clock, drill in the morning for two hours, dinner at 12 o'clock, drill in the afternoon for two hours, dress parade at 6 o'clock after supper, and roll call at 9 o'clock. On Sunday there was usually a general inspection; the men were marched to an open area and formed a hollow square for a morning church service and then were given the remainder of the day off. After mustering, drill became more intense. The new schedule called for drill three-fourths of an hour before breakfast and three hours of drill before noon.⁴¹ Private Rigby responded to the increased activity with, "What next--We maybe obliged to get a furlough to blow our noses. Get our 'dog collar' on and soon we become like

⁴⁰24th Iowa Correspondence, Col. Byam to Gov. Kirkwood, Oct. 3, 1862, and Col. Byam to Adj. Gen. Baker, Oct. 14, 1862; Shambaugh, Iowa and War, Vol. IV, p. 31; Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, pp. 62-63. Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, p. 189.

⁴¹Rigby Journal, Sept. 3, 1862, Aug. 31, 1862.

the dogs we are treated as."⁴²

As drilling began in earnest, drill instructors were at a premium. Officers were not above offering promotions to experienced drill masters in other regiments to get them to join the 24th. Captain Henderson wrote Governor Kirkwood on August 14, requesting a transfer for Orderly Sergeant McKinley of Company A, the 21st Iowa Infantry regiment, and a second lieutenant commission for McKinley in Company A the 24th Iowa Infantry. McKinley's transfer was needed because he was so proficient in the drill and of good moral character, not addicted to the use of spirits.⁴³ John Q. Wilds, who replaced A. B. Kendig as lieutenant colonel, had been acting as drill master since early September. Wilds was originally a captain in the 13th Iowa Infantry. Unlike many regiments in the Civil War, the 24th Iowa had an experienced veteran from the Belgian Army in Europe, Sergeant Lucas of Company D. On September 30, 1862, Lucas had a talk with Captain Wilson of the regular army who had been assigned to instruct the regiment in battalion drill. Captain Wilson, a cavalry officer, was having little success. Lucas suggested that Wilson assemble the officers at the colonel's headquarters once each day and use a blackboard to explain the movements in battalion drill. Seeing that Lucas was well informed, Captain Wilson asked the sergeant to lead the instruction. Lucas wrote, "I did so and the regiment improved faster after that."⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid., Sept. 26, 1862.

⁴³24th Iowa Correspondence, 1862, Letter, Captain S. H. Henderson to Governor Kirkwood, Aug. 14, 1862.

⁴⁴Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1862, Letter, Major Ed Wright to Governor Kirkwood, Sept. 7, 1862; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record, XVI (July, 1900), p. 127. While Bell Wiley says in The Life of Billy Yank

In addition to daily drill there were several other duties to perform. A chain of guards was placed around the entire camp, each guard walking a beat of fifty paces, back and forth continuously, for two hours. The guards' duty was to keep all their comrades in camp and to keep out all who approached without a pass signed by the commanding officer. Anyone caught was arrested and taken to the guard house. Since the camp was near a large watermelon patch, the guards were kept busy and, after payday, the guards themselves often took off for town. Besides having to stand guard once every two weeks, the men were often detailed to carry wood and water to the cooks and to sweep the company ground and to clean up in general. Hospital nurses and stewards were also detailed because some of the men became sick after only a few days in camp.⁴⁵

Most of the troops in the 24th Iowa felt Camp Strong was a very unhealthy place. While the camp was very level, making it ideal for drill, the drainage was poor and pools of stagnant water were left after the rain. The water supply generally was bad, and while few men were sent to the hospital, many remained sick in the barracks with diarrhea from drinking the water. On September 4, 1862, an orderly reported only thirty-six from a company of one-hundred men were fit for duty.⁴⁶

While at Camp Strong, the men also suffered from an epidemic of

that it was not uncommon for regiments to set up their own school for officers, it was uncommon to find a qualified person to do the instructing. Captain Wilson had been assigned to instruct an infantry regiment, but his training had been for the cavalry. It was, therefore, fortunate the 24th had a number of experienced commissioned and non-commissioned officers like Wilds and Lucas.

⁴⁵Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), pp. 4-5; Rigby Journal, Sept. 3, 1862, Aug. 29, 1862.

⁴⁶The Tipton Advertiser, Oct. 2, 1862, p. 3; Rigby Journal, Sept. 4, 1862.

measles, contracted by 125 men. The disease was attributed to fungus of wheat straw, which had been infected with rust and which was used in the barrack bunks. The severe epidemic resulted in three deaths, and Dr. Ely, the regimental surgeon, doubted if any who contracted measles ever fully recovered. Known as the "measly boys," these men seemed to be the first to contract other ailments such as "camp disease," and they seldom responded to treatment and often died.⁴⁷

Medical reports indicated measles usually were most common among new recruits. Measles, usually striking in epidemic proportions, occurred most often during the winter months. While usually mild and lasting only three or four weeks, measles could be deadly if the patient received improper care and exposure. Rural regiments tended to be more susceptible to this and other illnesses than urban soldiers.⁴⁸

While camp life was to have somber moments, the soldiers sought a wide variety of activities to lighten the monotony of daily drill. The women of Muscatine and the surrounding area often brought in whole banquets to alleviate the usual fare of "Salt pork, Fresh Beef, Poor Bread, Rice, Beans, Tea, Coffee, Sugar." The meals were often followed with patriotic singing and dancing. Camp was often filled with visitors from home, and the men delighted in showing off.⁴⁹

During the last two weeks at Camp Strong, Sergeant Lucas got the reputation as the best drilled man in sword and bayonet exercise in both the 24th and the 35th Iowa regiments. Captain Flanagan of the 35th

⁴⁷Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 108.

⁴⁸Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, pp. 132-33.

⁴⁹Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Sept. 17, 1862.

challenged Lucas to a duel with wooden swords before a large contingent of both regiments. Flanagan had the reputation as the best swordsman in the area, but the little Belgian sergeant parried his every blow and struck back almost as well to the wild cheering of the men in the 24th Iowa.⁵⁰

Since the 24th was a "Methodist Regiment," prayer meetings were high on the list of activities of many of the recruits. One was held almost every night, and there were two church services on Sunday. Many recruits spent their Sunday afternoons "in reading, writing, shaving, sleeping, playing cards, in fact every conceivable employment of camp life."⁵¹

Having received the first month's pay of \$13 in advance, many sought amusement in town. The merchants of Muscatine welcomed their business, providing an omnibus which ran six times daily between camp and town.⁵² Private Rigby joined this "rage of going to town" and purchased several things, ". . . among which was a soldier's portfolio. It contained a place for everything necessary for a soldier in the stationery line, 2 bottles of ink and a gold pen."⁵³

After mustering in and receiving their twenty-five dollar bounty in "green backs," many went to town to purchase photo albums and to have their pictures taken. Three members of Captain Dimmitt's company

⁵⁰Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 128.

⁵¹Rigby Journal, Aug. 31, 1862. Card playing bothered Rigby the most, and he threatened to tear up a group's deck of cards on one occasion.

⁵²Muscatine Daily Journal, Sept. 2, 1862, p. 3.

⁵³Rigby Journal, Sept. 6, 1862.

purchased a small press and printing material and began to publish a camp paper called "Camp Life."⁵⁴

Although called the "Temperance Regiment," apparently some members were not completely temperate with their free time. Private Rigby recorded in his journal after a party:

Some of our boys act as if they never saw a lady before. It is a burning shame that men joining in such a glorious cause should be so devoid of principal and self respect as to give utterance to the basest obscenity in their presence. Men whom I expected better conduct act worse than South Sea Islanders.

Earlier he reported, "Found that we have many depraved minds in our company. Profanity and obscenity ran rampart." On a later occasion Rigby approved the rousting of the sutler who had been shortchanging the boys; they tore up his place until the major stopped them.⁵⁵

Although most recreational activities were unorganized in the Union Army, means of amusement were always available to the imaginative soldiers. The monotony-breaking activities engaged in by the 24th Iowa were far from novel but did show a wide diversity of interest, ability, and intellect. Religious activities were more pronounced, naturally, but Private Rigby's concern over some of the men's activities showed that complete religious harmony did not prevail, even in the Methodist Regiment.⁵⁶

Discipline seemed to have been strictly enforced by the officers of the 24th, especially when it came to drunkards. They were usually bucked and gagged, receiving little sympathy from most of the troops.

⁵⁴Muscatine Daily Journal, Sept. 5, 1862, p. 3.

⁵⁵Rigby Journal, Aug. 12, 1862, Aug. 31, 1862, Sept. 17, 1862.

⁵⁶Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, pp. 25, 152-91, 267-74.

Minor offenses, such as talking in ranks or being late to roll call, would bring extra duty such as cutting drains to let out standing water, or brush brooming the area. For fighting or insubordination an offender was often ordered to march four hours in front of the captain's quarters carrying a rail. For having a messy bunk during inspection, the offender usually was forced to march around the flag pole in the center of camp. Most men who tried to slip past the camp guard were caught and spent the night in the guardhouse.⁵⁷

The seriousness of drunkenness as an offense can be appreciated when the punishment, bucking and gagging was more closely examined. "Bucking consisted of setting the offender down, tying his wrists together, slipping them over his knees, and then running a stick or musket barrel through the space between the knees and over the arms. Gagging was the tying of a bayonet or piece of wood in the mouth." Many soldiers were carried away weeping after several hours of this punishment. Such harsh punishment was usually reserved for more severe offenses such as insubordination. Drunkenness, in regiments other than the Temperance Regiment, was usually punished by the offender walking around in barrels for several days or marching with a fifty pound pack. In a Temperance Regiment, especially while the lofty ideals were still sharp in the organization's mind, drunkenness was considered a disgraceful crime, not only by the officers, but also by the rank and file.⁵⁸

A correspondent for the Muscatine Daily Journal felt that the officers of the 24th Iowa were very severe, resorting to bucking and

⁵⁷Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), p. 5; Rigby Journal, Sept. 10, 1862, Oct. 19, 1862.

⁵⁸Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, pp. 197-202.

gagging for the slightest offense. But diary entries and letters home generally approved the punishments and held the officers in high esteem.

In one letter Colonel Byam was pictured as:

. . . a clear headed, far seeing man, who is both a popular and efficient commander. Lieutenant Colonel Wilds who 'has seen the elephant' while serving with the Thirteenth Iowa is tried and known to be a brave and efficient officer. Major Ed Wright, while inexperienced, had nerve and a will to execute and if there is such a thing as being posted in military affairs he would be.⁵⁹

Perhaps the men's confidence in their company officers was evident because they had been elected. Captain Lucas, who had risen from the ranks, wrote after the war that the early assessments had been fairly accurate except for Colonel Byam.

Colonel Byam was not a natural regimental commander and when he became aware of his poor health he should have resigned, and although neither Colonel Wilds nor Colonel Wright were known to be great temperance workers, yet they were good temperance men; they soon got to be good drill masters, they were also brave and fearless; in other words they were natural military men.⁶⁰

During October most of the men of the 24th Iowa were given a week's furlough to go home for one last visit. Those who were sick were sent first, and many recovered enough to be able to leave with the rest of the troops. Many of the men, realizing that some would never see home again, became melancholy. One private wrote:

It is quite probable that all the boys will get to visit their folks again before leaving here. But when, or where, we will meet again, it is not for us to say. We all expect to meet above, and only ask our friends at home to remember us in their prayers.⁶¹

⁵⁹The Tipton Advertiser, Oct. 9, 1862, p. 2.

⁶⁰Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Correction to the History of the Twenty-fourth Iowa Infantry, Letter, C. A. Lucas to the editor of the Annals of Iowa, March 5, 1894. Hereinafter referred to as Lucas Letter.

⁶¹The Tipton Advertiser, Oct. 2, 1862, p. 1.

The correspondent for The Tipton Advertiser asserted:

But we now live in the glorious hope that we will soon be permitted to depart from this spot of earth, to a different clime, where if living, we but live to add laurels to our brow and fame to our history, or dying we die as 'patriots' engaged in the defense of our 'country's banner,' and right of our fellow man.⁶²

Perhaps the most pensive comment is Private Rigby's journal entry, "Everything makes a great impression, for I may never see it again. . . . Up early to leave--parting scene the hardest trial of my life."⁶³

Before leaving, the troops were affected by another presidential proclamation. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued September 22, seemed to have been heartily accepted by most of the men in the regiment. Rigby wrote about a Negro barber who accompanied him back to camp after his furlough:

He is an agreeable companion and if of a lighter color would be prized as such. But a false idea still holds its sway debarring an oppressed people from rights which God & humanity demands.⁶⁴

Colonel Byam on October 2, joined a group of speakers in favor of the president's Emancipation Proclamation at a rally in Muscatine, saying he ". . . had a regiment ready to lead south to enforce it."⁶⁵ On October 6, the governor visited the camp to review the troops and made a speech about the president's Proclamation, stating that he supported it fully and opposed any characters who attempted to create ill feeling toward the chief executive. Rigby admitted, ". . . we have some hell begotten wretches who have extreme nerve to disseminate their hellish sentiments in our camp." But he claimed that the governor was received

⁶²Ibid., Oct. 16, 1862, p. 2.

⁶³Rigby Journal, Sept. 22, 1862, Sept. 23, 1862.

⁶⁴Ibid., Sept. 23, 1862.

⁶⁵Muscatine Daily Journal, Oct. 2, 1862, p. 3.

by the majority with great enthusiasm.⁶⁶

The election results of October 14 seemed to bear out the idea of pro-administration sentiment. The 24th Iowa regiment cast 694 votes for the state ticket, of which the Republicans received 589.⁶⁷

On the thirteenth of October the regiment received its flag, thanks to the women of Red Oak, Iowa, who raised the money, and the ladies of Muscatine who made the flag free of charge.⁶⁸ The men had undergone weeks of drill, and most were now anxious to put their new skills to a better use. "Wednesday next is the day set for our departure, and we earnestly hope then to make a start for the land of Dixie." The men were now fully equipped with the clothes and arms. They had achieved some degree of proficiency in drill and were eager to try their new "Secesh Slayers" on real live targets.⁶⁹ Many felt like Private Rigby, who wrote after the second death in Company C, "I hope if I die it is on the battlefield."⁷⁰ The battlefield was still many months away in time, but on the twentieth of October, it was brought closer in distance.

While the 24th Iowa was going through the routine of becoming soldiers in the Union Army, their future destination was being influenced by the future corps commander, General John A. McClernand. McClernand, a political general from Illinois, was trying to convince President Lincoln throughout most of September, 1862, that a Mississippi campaign was needed to open that inland water and to divide the South. McClernand

⁶⁶Rigby Journal, Oct. 6, 1862.

⁶⁷The Tipton Advertiser, Oct. 16, 1862, p. 3.

⁶⁸Rigby Journal, Oct. 13, 1862.

⁶⁹The Tipton Advertiser, Oct. 16, 1862, p. 2.

⁷⁰Rigby Journal, Oct. 8, 1862.

who had been having problems serving under General Grant, wanted independent command of the Mississippi River forces. President Lincoln, who was well aware of the potential of opening the Mississippi, finally gave tentative approval to McClernand in early October. McClernand was empowered to show his orders to the governors of Indiana, Illinois and Iowa, and the general was to forward troops from these states to designated points in the South. Secretary of War Stanton sent a message to Governor Kirkwood, October 8, 1862, asking how many regiments of infantry and cavalry he could furnish and have ready in two weeks for an expedition against Vicksburg to clear the Mississippi. Kirkwood replied on October 10, 1862, that he had fifteen regiments of infantry ready, but he only had arms for ten. The 24th Iowa was one of the first ten Kirkwood sent for the Mississippi Campaign, and although General Grant would assume overall command, the 24th Iowa would become part of the XIII Corps commanded by General McClernand.⁷¹

On the morning of October 20, the 24th Iowa, accompanied by the 35th Iowa, made preparation to leave, and after dinner, marched through Muscatine to the wharf where they boarded the Hawkeye State. Although this steamboat was one of the fastest and largest boats built in the Pittsburg area in 1860, it would not hold 1,000 men and their equipment. So a barge was lashed to one side of it. The men were marched on board by company and assigned some part of the boat. The enlisted men were given deck passage, and the luckier ones found some shelter under the upper deck. But three companies had to be quartered on top of the barge

⁷¹Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, pp. 58-97; Bruce Catton, Grant Moves South (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1960), pp. 324-27; Official Records, Series III, Vol. II, pp. 653, 658.

without any shelter whatever.⁷²

Dr. Ely reported that many of the "measly" convalescents got bronchial troubles from the exposure, and many of these would be left at hospitals along the river on the journey south.⁷³ Colonel Byam himself was sick and had to be carried aboard along with a large number of others. The vast majority, however, were in high spirits at the prospect of getting into active service in the South. At 5:30 P. M. the steamer headed downriver amid the cheering and flag waving of between 1,200 and 2,000 people on shore.⁷⁴

The trip down the river to St. Louis was an exciting adventure for many of the farm boys who had never been out of the state. During the night they stopped briefly at Burlington, Iowa, and later saw the towering ruins of the Mormon temple as they passed Nauvoo, Illinois. At Montrose, Iowa, they were ordered onto the barge to lighten the boat, and they safely negotiated the Mississippi rapids there. At 8:00 A. M. October 21, they arrived at Keokuk, Iowa, and left four of their sick at the hospital. The boat started south again at 10:00 the next morning, and after passing the mouth of the Des Moines River, the regiment got its first look at Dixie. Private Rigby was so excited that he got his cousin Will, the Second Lieutenant of Company B, to pass him to the upper deck where the officers' cabins were. They passed by several small river towns, Warsaw on the Illinois side and Canton and La Grange on the Missouri side. At 1:00 P. M. they stopped at Quincy, Illinois, and

⁷²Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), p. 8.

⁷³Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 108.

⁷⁴The Tipton Advertiser, Oct. 23, 1862, p. 3.

Private Levi Hoag commented he would like to return there and live on the bluff after the war. Private Rigby felt that Hannibal, Missouri, was a better city, but it had the appearance of hard times. An academy located there ran up the United States flag, and all the soldiers on board cheered. Rigby wanted to return there after the war and explore the Hannibal Cave.⁷⁵

By 5:00 A. M. on the twenty-second, they had arrived in Alton, Illinois, and viewed the gray walls of the Illinois State Prison. The country-side was low and swampy, and five miles below the city, the muddy Missouri River emptied into the Mississippi. That evening the city of St. Louis, Missouri burst into view. It was a magnificent sight; as far as the eye could see were steamboats, and northwest of the city was Burton Barracks rebuilt by John C. Fremont.⁷⁶

The men of the Twenty-fourth Iowa Volunteer Infantry had completed the first leg of their journey into war.

⁷⁵Rigby Journal, Oct. 21, 1862 and Oct. 22, 1862; Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Katherine Gue Leonard Collection, Diary of Levi L. Hoag, Company C, Twenty-fourth Iowa Infantry, Oct. 21, 1862. Hereinafter referred to as Hoag Diary.

⁷⁶Rigby Journal, Oct. 22, 1862.

Chapter 3

WINTER CAMP AT HELENA, ARKANSAS

Arriving in St. Louis, October 22, 1862, the 24th Iowa received orders to proceed downriver to Helena, Arkansas. New Union regiments gathered mainly from Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa were being organized under General McClelland for his Mississippi Campaign. Training for the proposed assault on Vicksburg was taking place at two major locations. The members of the 24th were disappointed that they had been assigned to Helena instead of the more popular location of Memphis, Tennessee.¹

The stopover at St. Louis was brief with time only for a meal at the sanitary commission and a cheer from some sewing women at a factory as the 24th Iowa was marched to a new steamer to complete the journey downriver to Helena. Because of the overcrowded conditions on the new steamer, the regiment was divided with Lieutenant Colonel Wilds taking six companies south aboard the Empress. Major Wright, commanding companies A, I, F, and D, joined the 26th Iowa aboard the Imperial. Both ships were crowded with army stores of ammunition, beef cattle, and soldiers. Colonel Byam, who was ill when the regiment left Iowa,

¹Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 326.

remained at Cairo, Illinois, to return home.²

While at Cairo the regiment had its first encounter with the Rebels. The Emerald, a prison ship with about 1,000 prisoners, was also on its way south for a prisoner exchange. A combat of words followed. "Why you ran so fast at Bull Run that you left your breeches!" "Why in the world didn't you put them on then? Aint you mistaken in your geography? Wasn't it Pea Ridge?" The Confederates were described as good-sized men, but ragged and dirty, and hard looking.³

The first contact with slavery was also made on the trip to Helena. The riverboats often used Negroes as porters, and a number of contrabands were seen on steamboats coming up river with captured rebel property. Private Rigby was concerned that many Negroes did not understand the president's Emancipation Proclamation. Although most of the 24th Iowa were pro-abolition, even Rigby had no idea of social equality.

There now! a stupid nigger came along and upset my ink bottle spilling nearly all its contents. But it would not be orthodox to get mad at contrabands. We now have them at every corner. When I am busily engaged . . . to be brought to a stand still almost knocks the abolitionist out of me.⁴

Signs of war were prevalent, especially on Island No. 10 where the boats stopped until a snow storm abated. The inclement weather caused many to complain bitterly about the "Sunny South" as they dined

²Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), p. 9; Rigby Journal, Oct. 22, 1862; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 19; The Tipton Advertiser, Nov. 3, 1862, p. 2.

³The Tipton Advertiser, Nov. 3, 1862, p. 2. Rigby Journal, Oct. 24, 1862.

⁴Rigby Journal, Oct. 23, 1862. Union soldiers referred to runaway slaves as contrabands, especially after the Emancipation Proclamation which meant that a runaway slave who escaped to the Union lines would be free. Helena, Arkansas, had a large contraband population.

on two hard crackers, a slice of raw pork, and a cup of coffee. The war scenes caused Private Ezra Webb to write, "The country is markt with the sens off ware and Evra town there can be seen the mark that ware has made it lase fields in waste and marks evra thing where it goes but its in there own country and they was the cause of it and they must stand the best they can."⁵

At Memphis, Tennessee, the sick were put in the hospital. The beautiful, little town's stores were nearly all closed, and prices were very high in the few that were open. Between Memphis and Helena the troops were allowed to load their guns for the first time, an awkward enterprise at best. But with the excitement of possible attack and the lack of experience, the scene became comical. Some men bit off the end of the cartridge and spilled all their powder before getting it into their guns. They dropped the bullets, and even the ramrods slipped out of their fingers. No enemy was sighted, and the companies arrived at Helena without further mishap on the evening of October 28, 1862.⁶

Helena, Arkansas, on the west bank of the Mississippi River about 100 miles below Memphis, was the nearest river base to the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg, Mississippi. Before the war Helena

⁵Rigby Journal, Oct. 25, 1862; Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, 24th Iowa Infantry Record of Ezra W. Webb, Oct. 25, 1862. Hereinafter referred to as Webb Record. Private Ezra Webb had served in the 11th Iowa Infantry and was discharged for disability June 4, 1862, after the Battle of Shiloh. At the age of twenty-five he enlisted in the 24th Iowa Infantry on July 31, 1862. Webb was wounded severely and taken prisoner April 8, 1864, near Mansfield, Louisiana, and died of his wounds April 22, 1864. Webb's diary covers the time period of July 31, 1862, to February 15, 1864. While not as literate as some of his peers, his diary is very descriptive and accurate.

⁶Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), p. 10; Rigby Journal, Oct. 27, 1862.

had been a little town of about 500 inhabitants, but in July, 1862, under General Samuel Curtis, the Union army had built a strong fort on the bluff above the town, and between 10,000 and 15,000 troops were stationed there. The area was very swampy and unhealthy, and the 24th Iowa, with many men weak from the measles epidemic, had many die before the winter was through.⁷

The 24th Iowa went into camp one mile south of Helena between the levee and the river. The location was not ideal, with no shade, sandy soil, and only yellow river water to drink. Regimental wagoners brought small, eight foot square tents, seven feet high and "A" shaped from the docks. The men broke up into messes of four or five each. Sometimes the messes would combine, placing their tents end to end, and hire a contraband to cook.⁸ Rigby wrote:

We had the good fortune to secure the services of a contraband by the name of Moses . . . he is the quaint essence of fun . . . for an hour or two he amused the boys by various negro antics. The Captain finally took him to his quarters which ended the spirit.⁹

The regiment had a great deal to do upon arrival at the camp site. The tents had to be set in properly spaced rows, and a corral had to be built for the regiment's wagon mules. A forty acre cornfield was cleared to serve as a parade ground, and the men received their first instructions in the proper way to load and fire their rifles.

⁷S. H. M. Byers, Iowa in War Times, p. 236; Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue, Lives of the Union Commanders (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), p. 108; Webb Record, Oct. 27, 1862.

⁸Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Nov. 1, 1862; Rigby Journal, Oct. 28, 1862; Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), pp. 10, 11.

⁹Rigby Journal, Oct. 28, 1862.

While accuracy was not stressed, the goal was to fire on command and hit or pass near a target four feet from the ground at a distance of 400 yards.¹⁰

Gunboats patrolled the river side of Helena. But every morning each regiment detailed about fifteen men for picket duty along a twelve mile arc along the land approach to the city. Each regiment had about five posts about thirty rods apart with three men to each post and an officer in charge of all five posts. While the duty was hazardous because guerrillas were constantly picking off guards, the men generally enjoyed the break in camp routine. While on picket, Private Webb profited his company by killing a cow, a welcome relief from the sow belly and hard crackers. Such foraging was common, and the troops of the 24th were amazed at the way older regiments went out in the country and brought back whole wagon loads of lumber from torn down houses.¹¹

At first the 24th Iowa sent its men only to the nearby timber to cut wood. But as the six mule teams were trained to pull the company's big army wagons, the Iowans joined some of the foraging parties into the countryside. Private Rigby volunteered for one of the first in order to see the country and to have some adventure. Joining with a group of 100 wagons, they were forced to go many miles from Helena to get a wagon load of corn. Rigby was surprised at the number of farms where corn and

¹⁰Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Nov. 1, 1862; Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), pp. 11-14.

¹¹Ibid. Webb Record, Nov. 1, 1862. In Life of Billy Yank, Wiley says the staples of army diet were bread, meat, and coffee. Bread was usually a hard cracker or biscuit about one inch thick, three inches wide, and seven inches long. Sow belly or salt pork was a common meat ration in the Union army. Veteran soldiers often placed their pork ration between two crackers and ate it raw.

sweet potatoes were grown instead of cotton. A hog was shot and hidden under the corn since this was against the confiscation principle. "On the way back the boys engaged in pilfering everything that wasn't tied down. This was against orders but no one seemed to care . . . The boys oppose protecting Rebel property but General Hovey is so slow in getting guards posted the good is gone anyway."¹²

The Iowa farm boys were very impressed with the land and timber in the area but felt that its care was disgraceful. Private Amasa Allen said the plantations of the South were not what they were represented to be, and he believed that it was the most God forsaken country he had ever seen. Rigby thought that the land was uncared for, but that if he could move the soil to Iowa, he would soon grow wealthy farming it.¹³

The first two weeks were spent getting settled into a soldier's life and routine at Helena. A Grand Review was held to denote the regiment's assignment to the brigade, commanded by Brigadier General George F. McGinnis, former colonel of the 11th Indiana. On Sunday, November 9, the chaplain noted in his sermon that the men had adjusted too easily to the bad habits of swearing and card playing. The mornings usually were spent in company or skirmish drill while the afternoon usually called for battalion drill or officer drill.¹⁴ According to Sergeant Lucas:

¹²Rigby Journal, Nov. 4, 1862. Wiley states that Billy Yank did a great deal of foraging, whether approved by generals or not. Since most of the foraging parties were led by captains or lieutenants who were in sympathy with the men, little control was enforced.

¹³Ibid., Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Nov. 1, 1862.

¹⁴Frederick H. Dyer, Regimental Histories, Vol. III of A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959), p. 1174. Hereinafter referred to as Compendium of the War; Rigby Journal, Nov. 9, 1862.

One day when drilling the company in the manual of arms and also marching, General McGinnis stopped and watched about 15 minutes. He called me aside and asked me if I would be willing to give instruction in the manual of arms and also in marching, to the company officers of the brigade, and I told him I would. And so for three days in succession, we had drill for the company officers of the brigade, for about one hour--and the General complimented him on the results. But just think of a sergeant giving instructions to Captains and Lieutenants; but they all obeyed the commands just like the boys of my company.¹⁵

During their free time the regiment's members became very good at foraging or jayhawking. More than 8,000 bricks were brought in to make a regimental bakery, and "smooth horned elk meat" (a term for confiscated beef), smoked ham, and molasses, added to their regular supplies of coffee, hard crackers, sowbelly, sugar, and rice made Private Allen "as fat as a bear cub."¹⁶

On November 17, the regiment started downriver on the first of four winter expeditions. On board the Meteor, as part of a 12,000 man force commanded by Brigadier General A. P. Hovey, the 24th Iowa moved to the mouth of the White River. The plan was to attack Arkansas Post on the Arkansas River by proceeding forty miles up the White River and attacking the fortress by marching across country. The channel of the White River was too narrow, and the expedition returned to Helena in three days.¹⁷

Most of the troops believed that the expedition was a lark but a complete waste of time. Rigby pictured an engraving in Frank Leslie's

¹⁵Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 131.

¹⁶Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Nov. 11, 1862.

¹⁷Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 19; Warner, Generals in Blue, p. 235. Promoted for his gallantry at Shiloh when he was colonel of the 24th Indiana, Hovey was a division commander in Arkansas under Major General Samuel R. Curtis.

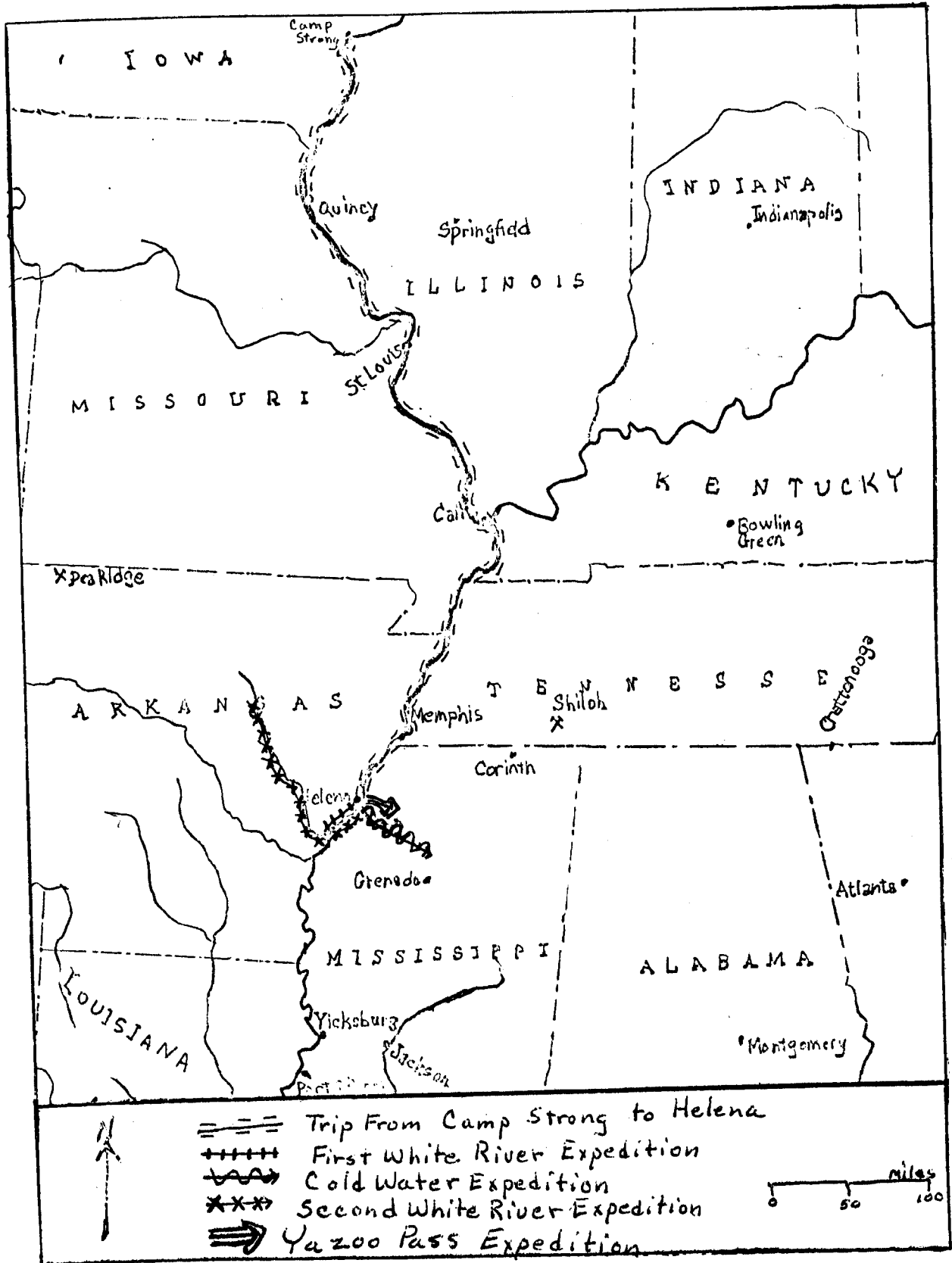


Figure 3.1. Movement of the 24th Iowa the Winter of 1862-63. Map adapted from James Truslow Adams, ed., Atlas of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 125.

Illustrated with the caption: "Grand Expedition up White River, one mile. Burned one secesh house took one paroled prisoner and captured a mule. The latter doubtless would elipse even the grand movements of the great Gen. McClellan."

The regiment did so much jayhawking when they could get ashore that Lieutenant Colonel Wilds ordered the ship to the middle of the river. But the troops were so full of mischief that they stole a bag of butter from the ship's captain, who speculated aloud, "If the twenty-fourth could fight as well as they could steel the devole couldent whip them in this war."¹⁹

Arriving back at Helena, the 24th Iowa found six new regiments had come downriver, bringing the total force to over 40,000 men. The men of the 24th were allowed little time to rest, for on November 26, the regiment formed part of an expedition, again under General Hovey, directed this time at Grenada, Mississippi. A transport fleet containing approximately 9,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry went downstream eighteen miles and landed at Friars Point, Mississippi. The movement of Hovey was to act as a diversion against the Confederate's flank while General Grant moved south from Holly Springs with the major attack force. Two

¹⁸Rigby Journal, Nov. 21, 1862; Byers in Iowa in War Times claims the feeling against General McClellan ran high and bitter in Iowa. The Tipton Advertiser, Nov. 21, 1862, said that the 24th Iowa felt like the appointment of Gen. Burnside to the command of the army of the Potomac, was received by the officers and soldiers (at Helena) with feelings of unbounded joy. If the 'young Napoleon' had accomplished as much during the last year and a half as the armies of the west, the approaching winter campaign would wipe the last vestige of the rebellion from existence.

¹⁹Webb Record, Nov. 17, 1862. Jayhawking as used by the members of the 24th and this writer is more commonly called foraging or stealing.

days of hard marching in ankle-deep mud at the rate of twenty miles a day followed. Arriving at the mouth of the Cold Water River on the 29th, the regiment camped in a cornfield.²⁰ According to Private John Coutts:

. . . we had a new experience . . . all we had for our beds was one blanket and one waterproof poncho. We made our bed between the rows of corn, . . . some gathering cornstalks, some pine boughs to keep them off the ground. About twelve oclock it commenced to rain and it just poured down for about two hours to you can imagine what our beds were like. . . . It was here that we learned how to make a bed of four rails, for instance you pick out the rails you want, one as flat and wide as you can get it, the next two will be all right if they are three cornered, and the other one don't matter for shape; lay the flat one then the three cornered ones on each side, these are laid across the first rail, with the other end on the ground; double your blanket three or four times and lay it on for a sheet then take your shoes or boots for a pillow.²¹

On November 30 the cavalry was sent out to destroy a railroad bridge on the Mississippi and Tennessee Railroad, and the 24th Iowa crossing the Tallahatchia River on a pontoon bridge, marched out to support the cavalry. But, not needed, the regiment returned to camp without firing a shot. After fortifying their camp and doing some excellent foraging, the troops returned to the Mississippi River December 6. The men seemed pleased with themselves, marching ten miles in three hours on one occasion. Dr. Ely, the regiment's surgeon, however, was very critical of the whole expedition. He claimed the surgeons did not have enough whiskey for the exhausted marchers.²²

Private Rigby, who was very skeptical of Dr. Ely's ability, had

²⁰Dyer, Compendium of the War, Vol. III, p. 1174; Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 332; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 20; Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 106.

²¹Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), p. 20.

²²Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 20; Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 107; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 132.

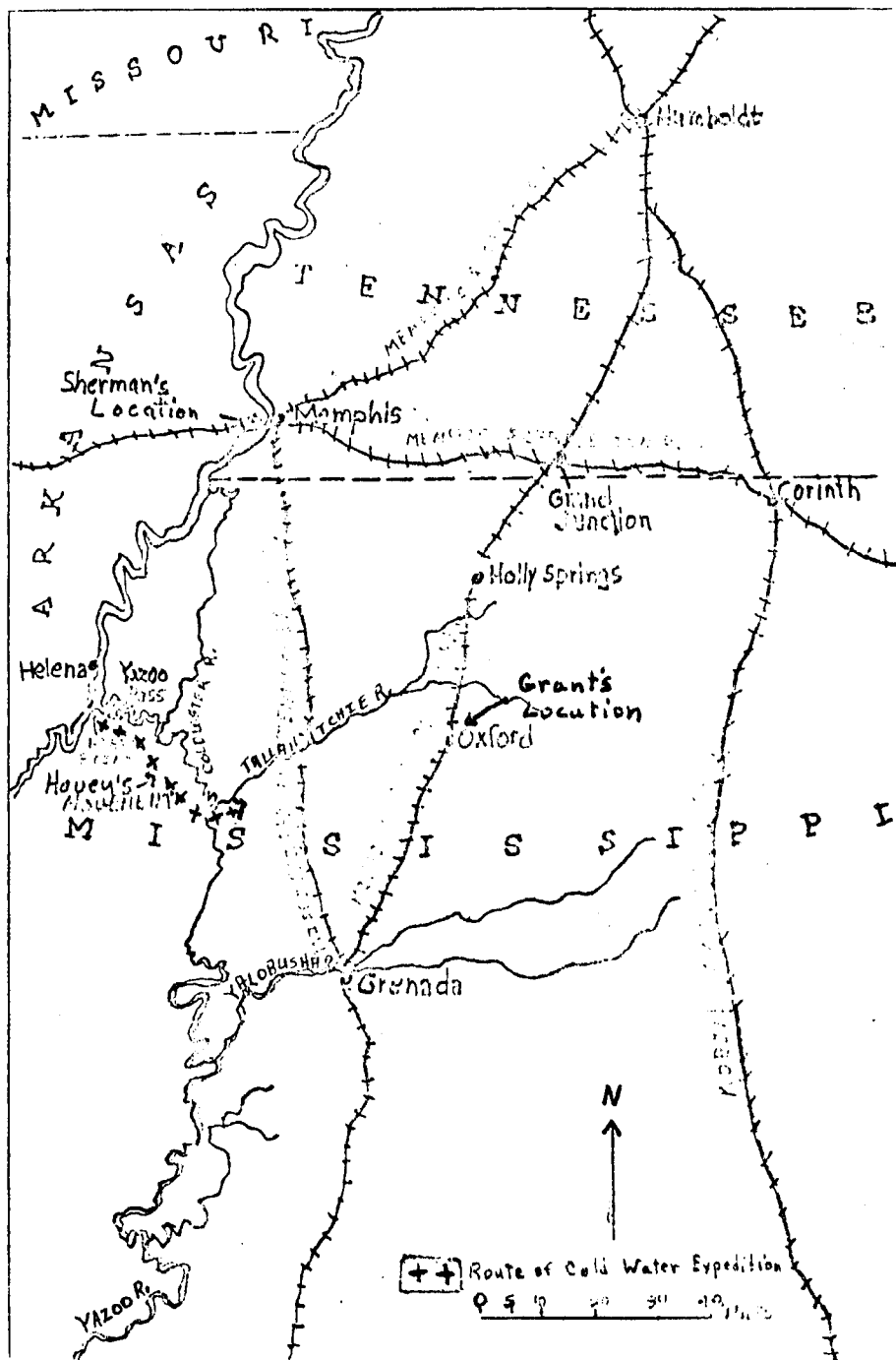


Figure 3.2. Cold Water Expedition. Adapted from Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 341.

thrown a prescription overboard that the doctor had given him rather than take the concoction. Rigby had some harsh criticism of the good doctor:

The villain of a Surgeon Dr. Ely tried to kick a sick person out of the ambulance--said it would teach the officers not to bring along the unfit on expeditions. . . . The whole company was enraged and the Lt. by threats got him a ride. Dr. Ely had better watch it or he won't have enough to bury him he has made many enemies in high places on this trip.²³

A third expedition from Helena was organized to coordinate with General Sherman's attack on the Arkansas Post fortifications. The troops were commanded by Brigadier General Willis Gorman. A force of 9,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry was loaded on thirteen steamboats, moving once again up the White River on January 11, 1863. Learning that Arkansas Post was taken, the fleet continued on up the White River and stopped at De Valls Bluff, Arkansas, a stronghold at the terminus of the Little Rock Railroad. Here the cavalry took about 25 prisoners, 2 cannons, and 400 small arms without firing a shot.²⁴

The expedition, while not very productive militarily, was another enjoyable outing for the 24th Iowa.

. . . burnt down a lot of houses the rebles would come to us and say boys don't burn my house I am a good union man but that

²³Rigby Journal, Oct. 26, and Dec. 6, 1862.

²⁴Dyer, Compendium of the War, Vol. III, p. 1174; Warner, Generals in Blue, p. 179; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), pp. 20-21; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), pp. 133-36. Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Civil War Diary of Sergeant Levi L. Hoag of Company C, 24th Iowa Infantry, Jan. 13, 1863. Hereinafter referred to as Hoag Diary. Sergeant Levi L. Hoag, a resident of Cedar County, was 29 years old at the time of his enrollment on August 15, 1862. The sergeant's education was only average, and his account is very factual about the things occurring to him and his company; he shows little concern for understanding the big picture.

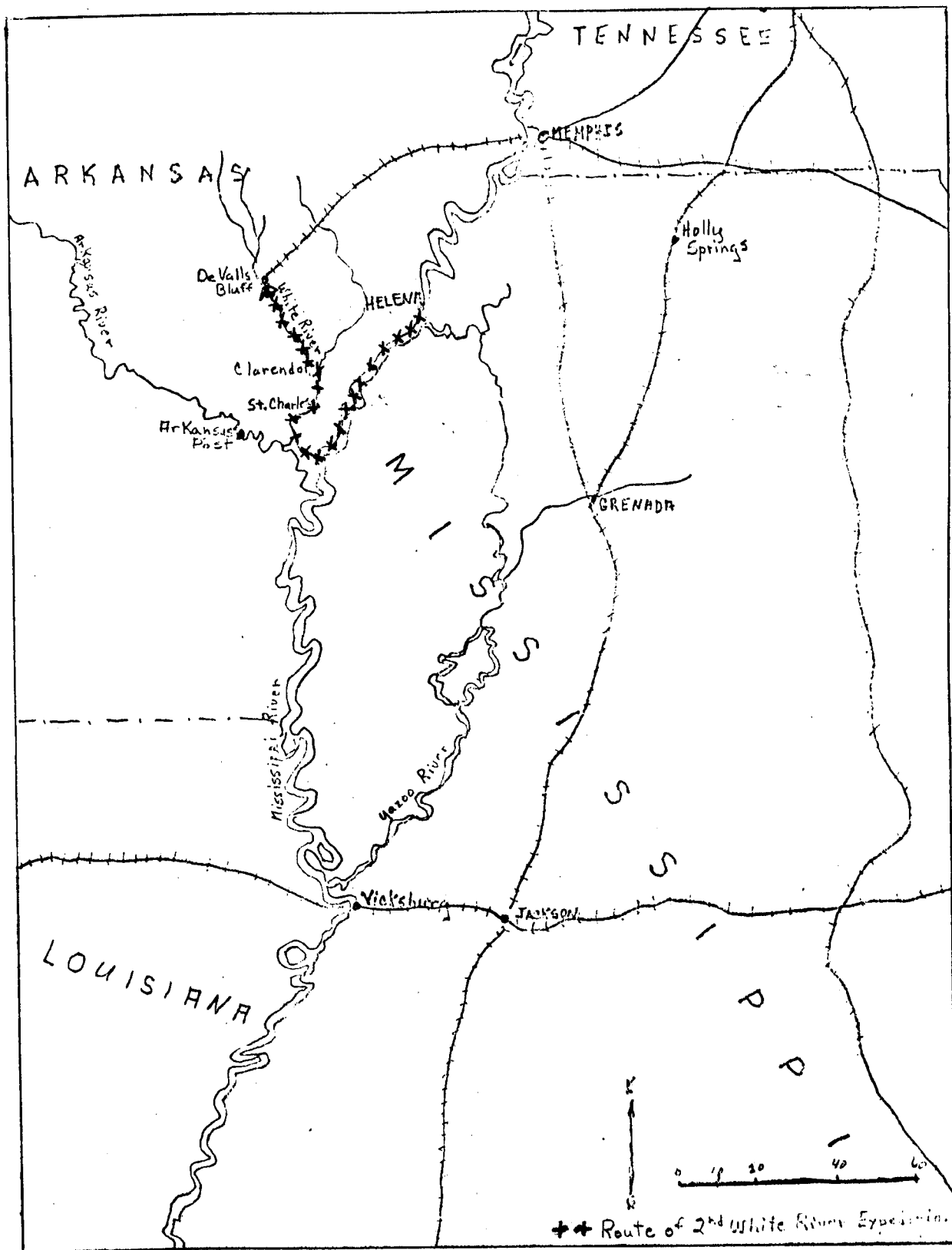


Figure 3.3. White River Expedition. Map adapted from Vincent J. Esposito, ed., The West Point Atlas of American Wars 1689-1900 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), Vol. I, map 100a.

didnt do any good we went right a head but we had to bee prety sly about it it was against the orders of the big officers if they would have found out who it was they would have courtmarshaled all of us but the wasn't anybody that new anything about it we had guards on our boat so that we codent get off to do any develment but I worket it so that I got off at every point that we stoped at they never ketched me are time.²⁵

Walked up to the station-saw two guns 64 pounders of Richmond mfg., visited a farm house and wanted to jayhawk some books, especially a Baptist manual, but the guard watched us too closely and didn't get a chance.²⁶

At De Valls Bluff the weather turned cold, and on the 19th of January it snowed eighteen inches. The men were glad to have their heavy, blue overcoats which had been rather warm up to that point.²⁷

Returning to St. Charles, the troops burned twenty buildings. St. Charles was only forty miles from Helena by land, but the White River was so crooked they had traveled 200 miles to get there. On the trip back to Helena, Private Rigby met a Methodist Episcopal Church Chaplain of the 9th Illinois cavalry who "preaches on Sunday and plays cards

²⁵Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Letters of James H. Shanklin, Co. H, 24th Iowa, James H. Shanklin to Nancy Shanklin, January 24, 1863. Hereinafter referred to as Shanklin Letters. James H. Shanklin was twenty-four when he enlisted August 9, 1862, as seventh corporal in the 24th Iowa Infantry. Dying of disease August 14, 1863, at Carrollton, Louisiana, twenty-nine letters which he wrote his wife, Nancy, survived. Corporal Shanklin was barely literate in his writings. He is very honest in his feelings about the army and the war, and he is the only writer who openly talks of deserting. Shanklin's pessimism perhaps stems from the fact he was unable to go south with the rest of the regiment. Being ill, he had to travel on his own at a later date. Shanklin's trip took him through Cairo which he described as "one of the most misserable holes that you ever saw you wasen't safe anywhere." Taking a boat from Cairo he lost all of his provisions to the 50th Indiana, "the hardest bunch he ever saw," and he was relieved when at Memphis he was able to transfer to a steamboat with a number of Iowa troops aboard, also bound for Helena.

²⁶Rigby Journal, Jan. 17, 1863.

²⁷Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 136.

and drinks whiskey in the evenings, how terrible, no wonder his men are devious." Rigby was also upset that a cavalryman had been bucked and gagged for being intoxicated while officers did it all the time, and nothing happened to them. General Corman was rumored of being drunk most of the trip and of having no authority to move up the White River to De Valls Bluff.²⁸

Arriving at Helena on January 22, the men thought that the old camp ground looked forlorn. Everything that would burn had been taken, and mud chimneys were all that remained. The river was so high that the camp had to be moved to the hills in the rear of Fort Curtis. Helena had turned into a muddy Venice with residents moving around the streets in canoes. All the roads were raised and piked, and in many places signs were posted saying "No Bottom" because even the six mule army supply wagons could not get through.²⁹

The sick rolls swelled, and death took, on the average, one soldier a day. Spirits fell lower and lower. The only bright spot was the superseding of General Gorman by Major General Benjamin Prentiss. Brigadier General Clinton Fisk, an avowed abolitionist who never drank or swore, was made new brigade commander to the satisfaction of most of the regiment.³⁰

²⁸Rigby Journal, Jan. 14 and 21, 1863; Hoag Diary, Jan. 15, 1863; The Tipton Advertiser, Feb. 12, 1863, p. 2.

²⁹Rigby Journal, Jan. 22, 1863; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 21; Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Jan. 23, and 26, 1863.

³⁰Rigby Journal, Feb. 13, 1863; Warner, Generals in Blue, pp. 154-55, 178-79, and 385-86. It is quite possible that the dislike for General Gorman stemmed more from the fact that he was an eastern general who had served under McClellan than because of his supposed cotton speculation. Prentiss, originally commissioned colonel of the 10th Illinois and a hero of Shiloh, was very popular with the western

On February 15, under Major General Cadwallader Washburn, the regiment joined its last winter expedition from Helena in an attempt to open the Yazoo Pass. Boarding the steamer H. Chautean, along with the 46th Indiana and the 28th Iowa, the troops were taken four miles down-river where they reached a cutthrough in the levee which a detail of the 24th Iowa had dug earlier. The water pouring through the break had flooded the countryside, but the large steamers could hardly get through the narrow channel formed by the break.³¹

A bayou known as Yazoo Pass had once joined the Coldwater, Tallahatchie, Yalobousha, and the Yazoo Rivers to form a chain of rivers eventually ending behind the Confederate fortress at Vicksburg. The Yazoo Pass had been reflooded by cutting through a levee near Helena, making a very deep but narrow channel. The Confederate forces had felled scores of trees across the waterway, blocking the channel below Moon Lake.³² After passing through the break, the troops came to Moon Lake where they were unloaded and camped for the night. The following morning they marched six miles to an abandoned sawmill and, with the extra boards, made an agreeable camp despite the rain. Foraging in the area was quite productive. Although the work was hard, the regiment lived well in camp.³³

Pulling the trees out of the channel was difficult.

We took a hook and a long two-inch rope with a hook on one end. Two or three of the boys would take the end with the hook and walk

troops at Helena.

³¹Hoag Diary, Feb. 15, 1863.

³²Catton, Grant Moves South, pp. 379-82.

³³Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 137.

out on the log or tree and drop the rope on the upper side. The current could wash it under the log and then the man with the hook would catch the end fasten it around the tree. Then the men on the rope would pull and a tree even 4 feet thick at the butt and 70 ft. long was no trouble at all.³⁴

The channel at this point was soon cleared, and the regiment was ordered back to Helena, February 23, with high prospects of getting paid. While they were gone John Weeks died, and Private Rigby was quick to blame the regimental surgeon. "Dr. Ely, . . . I know not but what he is truly the regimental butcher."³⁵

Dr. John Ely probably had many critics during the winter of 1862-63. The health of the regiment had been weakened even before they left Iowa by a measles epidemic, and the unhealthy, swampy living conditions at Helena did nothing to improve the situation. During the winter expeditions men often suffered from exposure and fatigue. Perhaps another reason for the Temperance Regiment's distrust of their surgeon was Dr. Ely's propensity to issue whiskey as a medical cure-all.³⁶

Because of the poor water at the first campsite, many in the regiment contracted typhoid fever, and the general inactivity of camp life and poor diet led to what was called the "Helena Quickstep" or diarrhea. Private Shanklin was a little more graphic in a letter to his wife. "The headacke that is bad enough but that aynt like having the shits in plane language like some of the boys has here." Dr. Ely blamed the diarrhea and other, which he termed "camp diseases," on the

³⁴Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1964), p. 27.

³⁵Rigby Journal, Feb. 23, 1863.

³⁶Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, pp. 106-107.

"morbid appetites of the men." Men accustomed to eating hard crackers and sow belly would often gorge themselves if the opportunity of something more palatable presented itself. Eating sugar cured hams raw allegedly led to the death of six men in the regiment. Shanklin claimed to be suffering from scurvy until he began eating more vegetables. The men's quarters were also poorly constructed and had almost no ventilation. Dr. Ely and his assistant surgeons, Dr. Henry Lyons and Dr. John Witherwax, caused quite an uproar when they ordered the roofs taken off the cabins once a month to air them out.³⁷

Assistant Surgeon Witherwax arrived at Helena in the middle of November with six of the sick who had been left at Camp Strong. Starting with twenty-three men, eighteen had to be left in the army hospital at Keokuk, Iowa. There were already eighteen from the 24th Iowa in the hospital at Keokuk from when the regiment had passed through. Dr. Witherwax reported that the hospital at Keokuk was in good condition.³⁸

The 24th's other Assistant Surgeon, Dr. Lyons, was appointed Post Surgeon because of his experience in several New York hospitals. Dr. Lyons successfully improved hospital care by taking over two fine Confederate mansions which were being used by the officers as residences. Even so, the men tended to treat themselves and went to the hospital only as a last resort. The trip to the hospital was likely to be the last by a recruit, through no fault of the surgeons, who might have

³⁷Ibid., pp. 106-10; Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, Jan. 4, 26, and Feb. 8, 1863.

³⁸Miscellaneous Correspondence, Dr. Witherwax to N. B. Baker, Nov. 6, 1862.

helped if they had been contacted earlier.³⁹

Dr. Ely described a medical practice which he claimed greatly improved the skill of those surgeons stationed at Helena and seemed to be a unique experience of the surgeons of the 24th Iowa:

Helena was the center of many negro refugees who without proper shelter died by the hundreds during the winter. Under arrangements made by Post Surgeon Lyons, a few of us were enabled for 6 weeks and just before taking the field, to make a good and proper use of many of these defunct unfortunates. All the known operations in military surgery were performed over and over again on these subjects. None but professional men can fully esteem the great value of this work under the circumstances. The fresh knowledge of relative anatomy thus gave us a decided advantage over medical staff around us. We alone were able to perform the operations on the field which were critical but required great skill to save lives.⁴⁰

Probably the most novel thing the Iowa troops encountered at Helena was the large number of Negroes who were living within the federal lines. Although in the accounts of Private Rigby there was a great deal of compassion and awe, there was also a large amount of stereotyping and prejudice with little thought of social equality. Rigby could not stand the sight of the contraband camps, but he was very impressed by many Negroes he saw while on picket duty. Contrabands were constantly coming into the lines to take advantage of the Emancipation Proclamation. While viewing some black roustabouts used to unload the steamboats, Rigby wrote:

Contrasting them with the Irish deckhands who were engaged in rolling bales of hay on shore, notwithstanding, the ebony features of the negroes, I should most assuredly chose them. They manifested a sprightliness of character which the Irish do not.⁴¹

³⁹Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 107; Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, pp. 124-51.

⁴⁰Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, pp. 110-11.

⁴¹Rigby Journal, Oct. 28, 1862.

Later a family group passed him while on picket duty.

Tell me not that affection's fire does not burn as warmly in these rude beast (tho undefined) as we the more favored of God's creation express in word less eloquent that in the scene just portrayed. The boys sang "The year of Jublela" which received the aprobation of their ebony auditors by broad grins showing their ivories which were marked contrasts to their features.⁴²

Rigby, like most of his comrades, soon became conscious of the color line and its importance in the South. While on picket duty he reported:

Two women asked to cross the lines, upon questioning found them to be contrabands. One would never have suspisioned one of them had she been anyplace else; Well dressed, straight hair, blue eyes, gave every indication of a preponderance of the anglo saxon.⁴³

Corporal Shanklin was not quite so compassionate:

I can see plenty of little fellows but they aynt the rite culler they look like they had been stuck in a dy pot

Some of the dirtiest negers that you ever saw there is Some of them that comes out in there silk they have the big times now dances they frolic all the time Between Christmas and new years Lt. Duten has a darky who answered the long roll with the troops las night but he is the exception.⁴⁴

Later Shanklin had his own personal servant:

I have one little nigger quite out I tell you he is a cute little fellow black as the ace of spades I have him out lumber for me every day nearly he can do it up splendidly I tell him if he don't cup for me I will flake him and the little fellow will put the best licks he nows how and pretty well . . . wants to send the little darky up to help with the farming but afraid he will scare the babies . . . he can throw back his head and show the whites of his eyes.⁴⁵

⁴²Ibid., Nov. 4, 1862.

⁴³Ibid., Dec. 28, 1862.

⁴⁴Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, Dec. 22, and 26, 1862.

⁴⁵Ibid., March 29, 1863.

Even the Corporal had his compassionate side though:

The soldiers that is here is getting hostile there is murders of Nigers nerely every night that is mean syn but they dont care they have got so case hardened that life is a misery to some of them . . . the other nite there was a wench walking a long the street and she was about six month gon and they ketched her and kicked her a round until she had her youngin rite in the street I tell you this aynt any place for a women of any kind She was to go out side of the shanty after night she would be grabed by some of the soldiers if I ever get that mean I dont want to live any longer.⁴⁶

Most members of the 24th Iowa took a rather callous view of the black population, at times not understanding why they had to unload riverboats while there were "plenty of darkys behind the lines" or claiming they had volunteered to fight for the Union, not for "the Nigger let them fite for their own freedom." A message from Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas that the president had decided to raise Negro regiments, however, was welcomed by most of the regiment.⁴⁷ Corporal Shanklin wrote an exuberant letter to his wife:

Nancy I believe we have come on the plan to put down this rebellion to arm the darkeys and to take every thing as we go that is just I have been wishing for it aynt of any use to play war with them any longer . . . the darkeys is all pitching in they have got up prety nere a reg of them since day before yesterday you ought to see the rebels kick a gainst it Nancy the army is in better hart than it ever has been we have struck them in a tender spot when we take the darkeys.⁴⁸

Private Rigby was also very excited about the prospect of Negro regiments. He described the April 4 assembly, where the new policy was announced, as one which would have made the traitors of the North see their days were numbered. Adjutant General Thomas expounded on the

⁴⁶Ibid., Feb. 8, 1863.

⁴⁷Ibid., Jan. 26, 1863; Rigby Journal, March 20, 1863.

⁴⁸Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, April 8, 1863.

administration's new policy for the successful termination of the war. General Thompson told them that he had authorization to raise ten regiments of colored soldiers in the district of Eastern Arkansas, and that he advocated the plan strongly. General Prentiss gave his approval also, as well as General Cadwallader Washburn and Congressman William Mitchel of Indiana, who had been visiting Grant at Vicksburg. Then the colonel of the 24th Indiana rose to speak for the 10,000 troops assembled. He said, "Take us out of this hole and lead us against the enemy, and we will conquer or die." Rigby related that there was loud applause and three cheers at the end for the president's new policy--quite a sight for many who a few years earlier were condemning abolitionists and now were approving an abolitionist policy.⁴⁹

Helena did, indeed, turn into a "hole" during the winter of 1862-63. Not only did the large number of deaths and sickness affect troop morale, but the government's policy of confiscation of cotton led to a great deal of cotton speculation by the officers, which upset many of the enlisted men who were not receiving their monthly pay.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Rigby Journal, April 6, 1863; Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors, pp. 289-90. In March, 1863, General Thomas went on an inspection tour of contraband camps in the west. He ordered all commanders to assist in raising Negro troops and offered commissions to the white soldiers who wanted to command Negro soldiers.

⁵⁰Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Feb. 8, 1863; Allan Nevins, The War for the Union, Vol. III: The Organized War: 1863-1864 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), pp. 351, 352. Hereinafter referred to as War for the Union. Nevins points out that once the lower Mississippi Valley was opened little could be done even to control the cotton buyers and speculators who followed the army. Even Grant and Sherman, two of the most uncooperative generals, could do little to control the situation. It was especially bad after the capture of Helena in 1862, as cotton could then be bought all along the Arkansas River for \$25-\$50 and sold in St. Louis for \$250. The town was full of civilian speculators working in connivance with military officers. "Billy Yank," according to Wiley, was commonly slow to get paid, and this was very hard on

Early in November Private Webb complained about a secessionist who claimed to be a Union man and who was protected from foraging parties by the officers. According to Webb it was impossible for a Union man to live in the midst of the guerrilla activities around Helena. The man's father was in the Rebel army, and anyone who was brought up with slaves to do his work while he sat in the shade, in Private Webb's opinion, could not be a true Union man. It was obvious to Webb that the cotton trade was carried on with the citizens of the country, and the "big officers" were the ones who profited. Calling it a "Speculation War," the troops began accusing General Gorman of allowing any "secesh" to get a pass to go in and out of the lines. While on picket duty Sergeant Hoag observed a number of southern women going to and from town; "secesh are allowed to come and go at their pleasure because they bring in cotton to trade for salt and flour."⁵¹

It was little wonder that the regiment was very excited when Major General Benjamin Prentiss took charge of the camp. General Prentiss, who had been a prisoner of war, took a hard line on cotton speculation and told the troops that, while he didn't approve of robbing women and children or pillaging houses, his troops in the future were to consign to the flames anything that would give aid and comfort to the enemy and which could not be brought into camp.⁵²

The Temperance Regiment's own attitude toward treatment of

morale. The 24th Iowa was paid only twice while at Helena, in March and April. It was a long winter without money.

⁵¹Webb Record, Nov. 20, 1862 and Feb. 3, 1863; Hoag Diary, Feb. 7, 1863.

⁵²Rigby Journal, March 13, 1863.

southern civilians had changed during the winter. Private Rigby was very upset on one of the first winter expeditions when some of the troops stole a gold watch from a southern lady. Rigby was shocked saying, "When men become so lost to self that they will interfere with helpless women it is time that their lawlessness was checked by military power."⁵³ Only Private Webb seemed to support such action, saying that, if they were not up to burning the houses of defenseless women, they had better go back home and get weaned:

this would make them mad and they would cus and sa that i was wrose than the rebles themselves but it would get them when i would ask them if they thought more of secesh women than the one that they left at home then they would say that did not come down to fight women they came to fight men but they hated to burn the house that belong to a reble captan because his wife cried and made a fus about it and say that her husband was forst in to the reble arma but it would get them to ask them if they would force any one to serve and then make them captain.⁵⁴

After suffering through a hard winter, the regiment hardened in its attitudes toward many things. Private Shanklin, following General Thompson's pep talk, said that he could wade through the enemy lines and take the men and women both and hand them up by their heels. One was no better than the other, and if a woman was trying to kill him, he would "treat her ruff."

I wish I was a General I wouldnt sho the women any mercy what is the use being so tender harted any thing for to put down this rebellion if we cant put it down and save the women let them go and save the country by all means and let them go we have plenty of women in the north we are here daily loosing men while we have been protecting their property.⁵⁵

This aggressive patriotic attitude that Shanklin wrote of in

⁵³Ibid., Nov. 19, 1862.

⁵⁴Webb Record, Nov. 20, 1862.

⁵⁵Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, April 8, 1863.

April was completely different from his January and February letter in which he talked of deserting. Then he had written:

as soon as the boys got paid they will be coming home and they will mow down the officers if they try to stop them. There are secret papers in all the Regiments about who will throw down their arms and go home. Nearly all the boys have signed it we have been in this little shit hole of a place nearly all the time with men dying everyday and they arn't going to stand for it much longer.

The corporal claimed he would wait till the first of April, and then if things had not improved, he would desert. While on picket lines chopping wood, he encountered some southern women, and one had offered to take him to stay with her until the war was over. She told him she had plenty to eat, and he wouldn't be hurt. All the farmers around there seemed to live in luxury, and this lady wore a silk dress and looked very nice. He thought if another one would ask him, he would go and stay until the war was over. Shanklin later wrote his wife that if he quit writing, not to worry, "the small pox is getting in the camp and I don't like to stay here among them but I don't expect I will come home until the war is over I cant worse my condition if I would go out among the rebles."⁵⁶

After letters like the above Shanklin had some real explaining to do--not about deserting--but about the southern women he was seeing:

Nancy them secesh women you was talking bout not flatering you atal but I wouldn't give you for all there is in the South they dont Scott my fancy they are to delicate they dont know how to wash dises they have darkeys to do all of the work do you suppose I wold want any thing to do with such as them I think I will be excused but if I could have a chance to \$leep with you I think I would occupy the chance and be glad of it when I think of what pleasant hours that we have spent together.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Ibid., Jan. 26, and Feb. 8, 1863.

⁵⁷Ibid., March 29, 1863.

Correspondence through that first winter at Helena kept the 24th Iowa's spirits from hitting bottom. Sometimes packages were sent which supplemented the meager army fare. Private Rigby received a package containing butter and cookies. Sometimes friends shipped enough goods for a whole company.⁵⁸ Allen reported that Company I received three barrels of potatoes, turnips, and beets, all packed together; a quantity of kraut, dried peaches, molasses; and some ginger snaps. The copperhead reports in Iowa that the troops in Helena were starving were false. In fact, Private Allen found that his wife probably was suffering more than he was.⁵⁹ Agnes Allen reported that she had had to leave their farm and move to town where prices were exceedingly high. Her father-in-law was being very shady about their livestock and was not giving her the proper amount for its sale. The children were sick, and the winter was very hard in Iowa. Finally, she wrote:

So Mrs. Reed has been writing to you has she? Well I aint the least bit jealous, if she does handsome more than I do and I know you think more of my little finger than you do of her whole body, now dont you?

Orlando I want you should explain yourself if you can for Obe wrote home to his wife that you was feeling Bully now I dont know what Bully means so just explain if you please.⁶⁰

Too often the letters home were written by others, telling loved ones the sad news that death had taken another member of the 24th Iowa. Death became so commonplace that it was given little thought; men were sometimes allowed to lay outside the hospitals for one or two days before they were buried. The burial was simple; the men were rolled in their

⁵⁸Rigby Journal, March 21, 1863.

⁵⁹Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, April 5, 1863.

⁶⁰Ibid., Agnes to Amasa, Sept. 7, 1862--Feb. 8, 1863.

blankets and placed in rough pine coffins. The dead man's property was generally auctioned off to pay for the outstanding debts. Private Allen bought an extra uniform in this manner and a needle kit which he mailed home to be given to the dead man's sister. For taking charge of the disposal of a man's possessions, Private Rigby was given some sutler tickets and postage stamps. If the soldier was fortunate, one of his mess mates would stay through the final hours with him. Rigby often sat up with sick friends and, on one occasion, had to close the eyes after one died. The hospital steward once gave Rigby a shot of brandy because he felt miserable. Later Rigby bought the dead man's boots and sent the money to his widow.⁶¹

Private John Shedenhalm's notebook recorded ten deaths, sixteen discharges or resignations, and sixteen who remained in the hospital after they left Helena. One man had deserted, leaving an active strength in Company E of only fifty-seven men out of the original ninety-five. When the regiment left Helena only 600 were fit. According to Sergeant Lucas, the health of the 24th had improved considerably in the spring. In January only about 450 men had been fit for duty, but by the middle of March, between 550 and 600 were fit. In October Company D had had ninety-six effectives, and now it had eighty-seven. But in January there were only fifty fit for duty.⁶²

⁶¹Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, Feb. 8, 1863; Rigby Journal, Dec. 9, and 10, 1862.

⁶²Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, Civil War Notes of John N. Shedenhelm, Co. E, 24th Iowa Infantry, Nov. 1, 1862-April 11, 1863. Hereinafter referred to as Shedenhelm Notes. Shedenhelm enlisted August 13, 1862, at the age of twenty-five and was mustered out August 28, 1865, with the remainder of the 24th Iowa. The notes read more like a day book than a diary. All transfers, details, deaths, etc., of Co. E are recorded.

In April the 24th Iowa was reorganized for the fourth time. The men of the regiment were becoming tired of the constant shifting from one command or organization to another. Private Allen wrote his wife:

I don't believe the U. S. knows what to do with the 24. We have been Brigaded three times since we came to Helena and tonight we heard that we didn't belong to any Bridage. We are the Temperance Reg. that's what's the matter.⁶³

Allen, however, was still proud of the 24th Iowa.

Ag I am glad that I belong to the Iowa State Temperance Reg., a good many said that in two months after we got into camp there would be no Temperance Reg. but if they will come to Helena they can find one here. Whiskey is not allowed unless prescribed by the Doctor. If a soldier goes to town and gets a little tight he is punished, Neigher is Card Playing nor Swaring aloud; . . . We have good Regimental and Company officers.⁶⁴

Lieutenant Colonel Wilds and Major Wright were the acting regimental officers during most of the winter. Colonel Byam, who had been left at Cairo, had made the journey in December. But upon arriving he learned his wife had died, and since his health was failing again, he returned home. Shanklin was glad that the old colonel was sick and going home because he gave them too many details, "he would keep gard to keep us from pissing around our tents and to keep us garding seseh property."⁶⁵

In a letter to Governor Kirkwood, Colonel Byam showed he was not completely satisfied with the way Lieutenant Colonel Wilds had taken over. Byam asked the governor to reject Wilds' appointment of a new

⁶³Dyer, Compendium of the War, Vol. III, p. 1174; Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Dec. 24, 1862.

⁶⁴Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, Dec. 24, 1862.

⁶⁵Ibid., Dec. 14, 1862; Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, Jan. 26, 1863.

quartermaster. Byam also recommended that the governor promote the first sergeant of Company B as first lieutenant, skipping over Second Lieutenant William Rigby because he was an incompetent officer. Naturally Private Rigby felt his cousin Will was being treated unfairly. Colonel Byam did not permanently rejoin the regiment until March. Again he imposed strict rules against swearing and card playing.⁶⁶

Shortly after Byam arrived, the brigade was assigned to the Second Brigade of the Twelfth Division, Thirteenth Army Corps. Their brigade was composed of the 47th Indiana, 56th Ohio, 28th Iowa, and the 24th Iowa.

The brigade was at first commanded by Colonel Peter Kenney of the 56th Ohio, whom the men generally disliked. Kenney's regiment was accused of "showing the white feather" at Pittsburg Landing, and it galled Rigby to serve under such an arrogant and egotistical commander. Colonel Kenney was accused of shooting one of his sergeants for insubordination. The thought of Kenney's leading the 24th into battle was almost more than Rigby could stand.⁶⁷

The troops began drilling in earnest with the bayonet, and the men of the 24th thoroughly enjoyed it. The Twelfth Division was commanded by General Gorman who had been accused of cotton speculation but was respected as drill instructor. Before they left Helena to join the Thirteenth Corps under General J. A. McClernand, Colonel J. R. Slack of the 47th Indiana was made commander of the Second Brigade to the

⁶⁶24th Iowa Correspondence, Col. Byam to Gov. Kirkwood, March 11, 1863, and Jan. 1, 1863; Rigby Journal, Jan. 31, 1863, and March 15, 1863.

⁶⁷Rigby Journal, March 17, 1863.

relief of many of the 24th Iowa men.⁶⁸

On the 11th of April, 1863, the 24th Iowa departed Helena for Vicksburg. Numbering a little over 600 men, they left behind 50 of the regiment in the clay hills and many more in hospitals at Cairo, Memphis, and St. Louis. Their departure was not with regret but with anticipation of seeing their first battle experience. Spring promised an early end to the war if Grant's army was successful at Vicksburg, and they were finally going to join Grant's army.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Ibid., March 6, and 18, 1863; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 23.

⁶⁹Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 24.

Chapter 4

CAMPAIGN AT VICKSBURG

Landing at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, about twenty miles above Vicksburg, Mississippi, on April 14, 1863, the 24th Iowa happily made camp in a clover field. After a pleasant trip downriver with four months' pay in their pockets and more prosperous plantations to jayhawk, the troops quickly put the grim memories of Helena out of their minds. Recruited originally for Major General John McClernand's Mississippi Campaign, the Iowans cared little if McClernand was now only their corps commander and that Major General Ulysses S. Grant was commanding the operation. Vicksburg's capture was the goal, and the 24th Iowa had arrived to play its part.¹

Protected by heavy artillery batteries on the riverfront and guarded by densely wooded swamplands at the land approaches to the north and south, Vicksburg had defied large-scale land and river expeditions for over a year. The Confederate stronghold blocked the flow of agricultural and industrial products of the Northwest down to Union-held New Orleans. To give the Confederates vital access to the food, horses, and recruits of Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana, Vicksburg--combined with Port Hudson 130 miles below--was viewed as the key to

¹Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 141; Rigby Journal, April 10, 11, and 14, 1863.

winning in the west.²

During the winter of 1862-63, General Grant had won the struggle to command the Vicksburg Campaign, but he had failed in every attempt to take the river fortress. The only successful movement had been made by his challenger for command, John A. McClernand, with the capture of Arkansas Post. Now firmly in command of his army Grant boldly adopted the only practical plan of attack that remained. Unable to reach his enemy from the north on the east bank of the river, Grant would march his army down the west bank of the river, cross, and attack his enemy from the south.³

Grant started the campaign with 40,000 men organized into three army corps. Grant's plan for the Vicksburg Campaign began late in March, 1863. While the XV Corps under Major General William T. Sherman demonstrated north of Vicksburg, the XIII Corps under Major General McClernand, and the XVII Corps under Major General James B. McPherson made a wide swing southward on the west side of the Mississippi and then back to the river at Hard Times Landing, two miles above Grand Gulf. Sherman's corps followed the same route, and they joined Grant early in May. Meanwhile, on the night of April 16, Admiral David D. Porter ran his river fleet in front of the shore batteries at Vicksburg. On the 22nd he was joined by five troop transports which also made the dangerous run. Unable to silence the gun emplacements at Grand Gulf,

²Catton, Terrible Swift Sword, pp. 376-79; Robert H. Fowler, ed., Struggle for Vicksburg, the Battles and Siege That Decided the Civil War, Civil War Times Illustrated (Gettysburg, Pa.: Historical Times, Inc.), p. 4. Hereinafter referred to as Struggle for Vicksburg.

³Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 408; Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, pp. 147, 153.

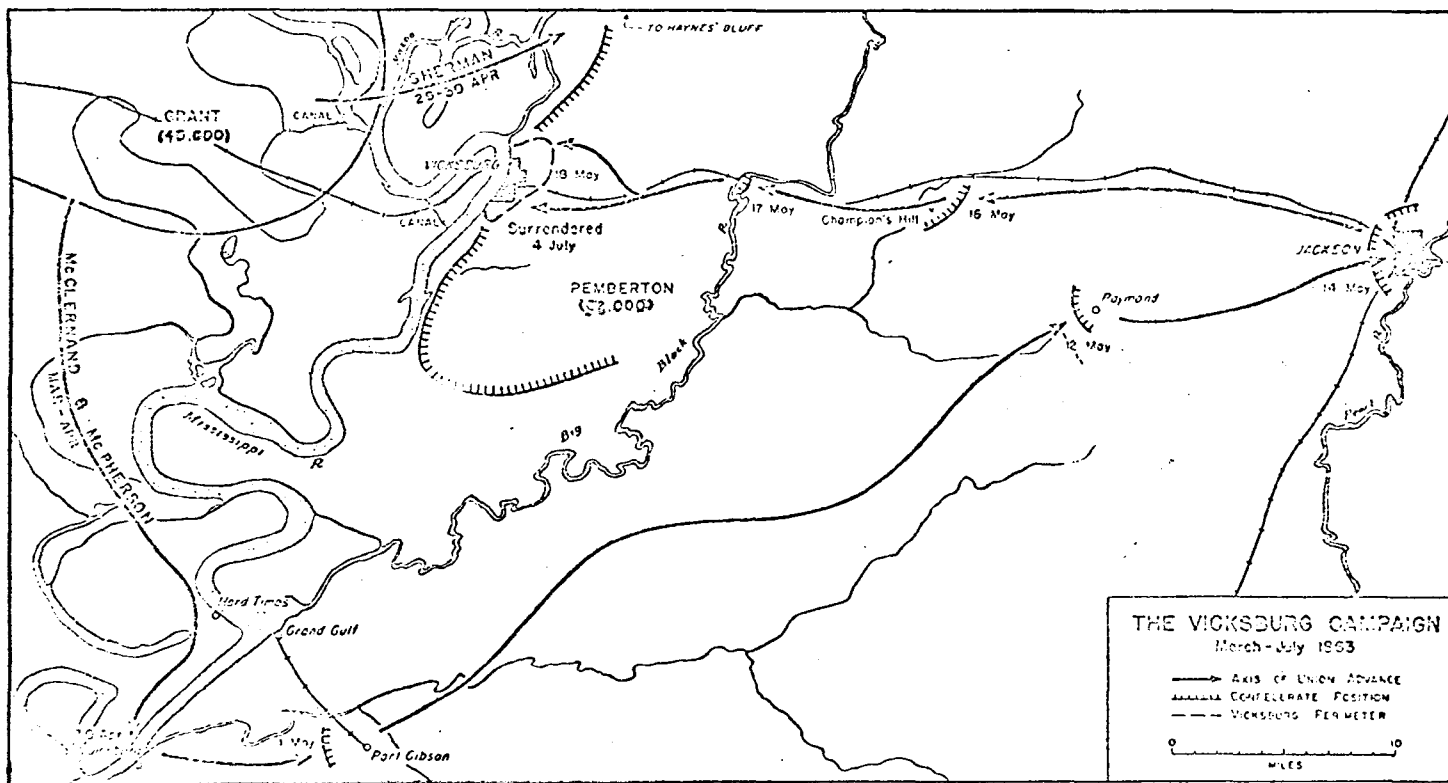


Figure 4.1. The Vicksburg Campaign. Map adapted from Maurice Matloff, ed., American Military History (Washington, D. C.: Office of the Chief of Military History United States Army, 1969), p. 238.

the river fleet moved downriver again and, on April 30, it began to ferry Grant's army across the river thirty miles below Vicksburg. While Grant's army was maneuvering for the attack on Vicksburg, a cavalry force of three regiments led by Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson was launched on a raid through the interior of Mississippi. Grierson disrupted Confederate communications, destroyed railroad track, and created the impression that a large force was operating west of Vicksburg. The cavalry raiders made it safely to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, having compelled various Confederate units to pursue him while he was thoroughly confusing the defenders at Vicksburg.⁴

Vicksburg was defended by about 50,000 Confederates under Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton. Another Confederate force of approximately 6,000 men under General Joseph E. Johnston was concentrated in the vicinity of Jackson, Mississippi, forty miles east of Vicksburg. Grant's forces moving inland were able to position themselves ideally between Pemberton's and Johnston's armies, after securing his beachhead south of Vicksburg in the Battle of Port Gibson. Using McClellan's corps to screen his movements from Pemberton, Grant sent McPherson to capture Raymond, Mississippi, on May 12, and uniting the corps of Sherman and McPherson, forced the Confederate forces at Jackson to withdraw May 14. While Sherman's forces destroyed the railroad terminus and industrial center at Jackson, Grant turned on Pemberton's army with McClellan's and McPherson's corps. Grant's army drove Pemberton's forces into their fortification at Vicksburg after costly victories at Champion's

⁴Bruce Catton, Never Call Retreat (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 193-95, 196-99; Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 422.

Hill, May 16, and Black River Bridge, May 17. By swift movement Sherman's corps was able to occupy the heights overlooking the Yazoo River that ran from Vicksburg to Haynes' Bluff. Grant's army, now with a secured supply base at Haynes' Bluff, settled for a siege of Vicksburg after failing in assaults on May 18 and 22. The siege ended with Pemberton's surrender on July 4, 1863.⁵

Immediately after the surrender Sherman drove a relief force under General Johnston back to Jackson and besieged it. Major General Nathaniel P. Banks received the surrender of Port Hudson on July 8, 1863. The whole Mississippi River was then under Union control, and the Confederacy was cut in two.⁶

All of this was yet to come, when the 24th Iowa began marching inland from Milliken's Bend. Ordered to store excess baggage in an old barge tied to the Cheeseman, Private Rigby was sure the men would never see their possessions again. The sick were left to guard the supplies, and on April 16, the 24th Iowa began following the route to Richmond, Louisiana, already taken by most of the XIII Corps. The road was soft from the rain and the passage of previous regiments, and the men discovered more of their valuable possessions should have been left on the barge. The roadside was soon covered with blankets, overcoats, knapsacks, cans of preserved fruits, and even camp furniture. Private Rigby took advantage of the situation by throwing away his worn blanket at the start of the march and picking up a good one shortly before they

⁵Catton, Grant Moves South, pp. 426-49; Catton, Never Call Retreat, pp. 193-206.

⁶Catton, Grant Moves South, pp. 479, 485.

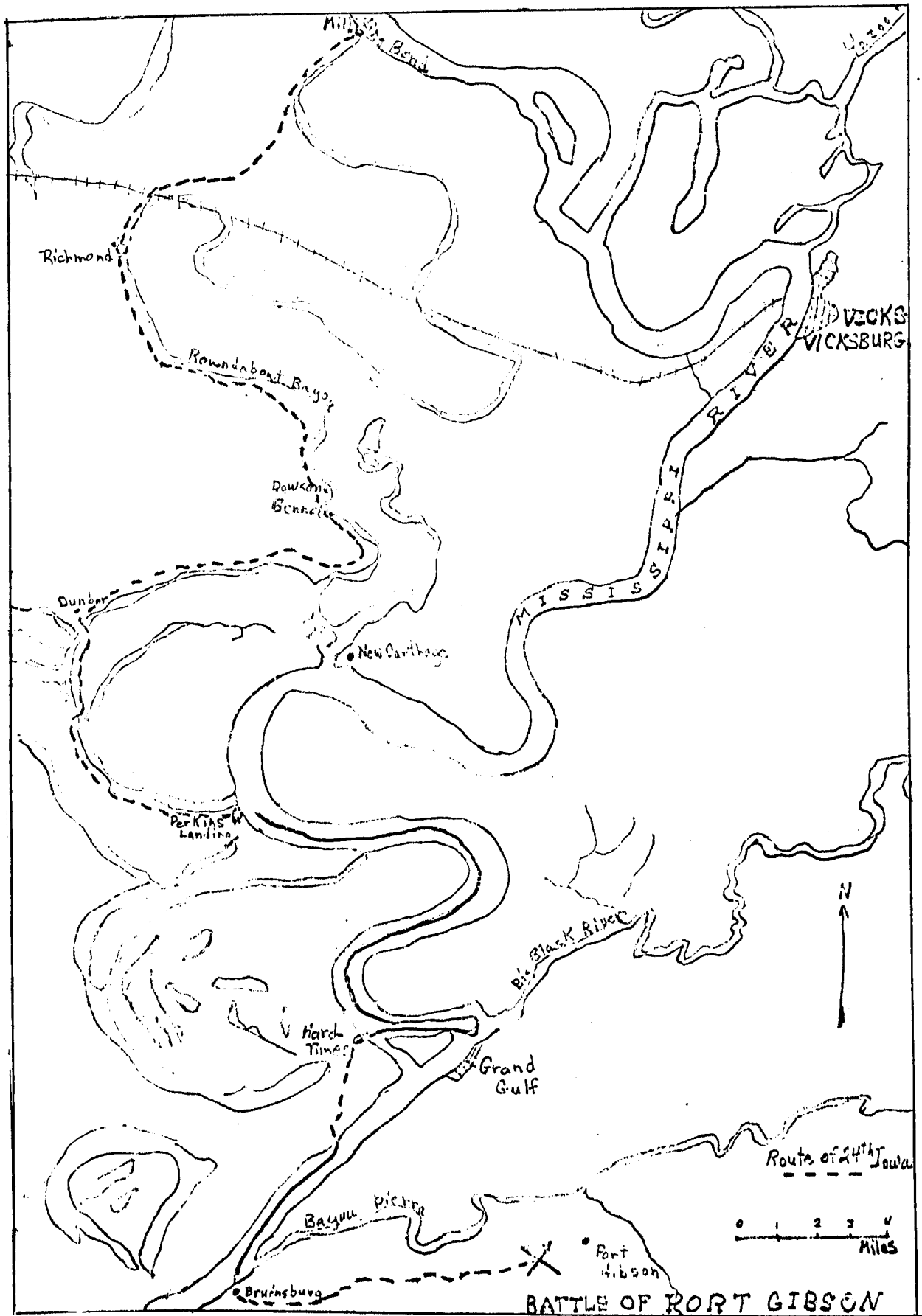


Figure 4.2. Millikens Bend to Port Gibson. Map adapted from Fowler, *Struggle for Vicksburg*, pp. 28-29.

made camp that afternoon at Richmond.⁷

The regiment reached Dawson's Plantation six miles from New Carthage, Louisiana, on April 17. The men's sleep that night was disturbed by the fire of the Vicksburg batteries as Porter ran his fleet past. Footsore, the men were glad they were allowed to rest the 18th. Relaxing on the plantation grounds, some members of the regiment found forage abundant with plenty of beef, pork, mutton, peas, and lettuce to improve the evening mess. Many of the men visited friends in other Iowa regiments in the XIII Corps also camped there (21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 28th Iowa). Rigby was pleased that Colonel Byam had taken the stripes from a corporal caught playing cards, but he was still shocked at the number of religious backsliders in the regiment. Rigby had to stop a man from abusing a Negro child.⁸

Charles Lucas who had finally received his commission as second lieutenant, due him since December 16, 1862, felt the 24th Iowa's division commander, General Hovey, was also very strict about enforcing good discipline among the troops. To keep the men from straggling too much, six roll calls a day were held. Lucas, by then an officer also, felt Hovey was right because "good discipline is what makes the strength of an army."⁹

On the 19th the regiment moved a mile to Bennett's Plantation

⁷Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, p. 141; Rigby Journal, April 15, 16, 1863; Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, April 15, 1863.

⁸Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, p. 138; Rigby Journal, April 13, 17, and 18, 1863; Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, April 17, 1863.

⁹Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 144.

for a better campsite. Sergeant Hoag reported that wherever the army moved, the fences and buildings came down. Most of the men used the boards under their blankets to keep them off the wet ground. Denied tents on this march, Rigby used fence boards to build a comfortable shanty to keep off the rain. Amasa Allen was shocked by the destruction of the army. He wrote his wife that beautiful plantation homes were ransacked and burned, and men often made sleeping cots out of \$25 mounds of cotton. Rigby was only upset because "some fool burned the local steam mill so now we can't grind corn." It was, therefore, quite a shock when Colonel Byam arrested Second Lieutenant Charles M. Dawes for selling molasses he had jayhawked. The colonel brought Lieutenant Dawes before the regiment at dress parade and publicly degraded him for being a "thief and a huckster." Dawes resigned his commission as a result.¹⁰

The morning of April 20, Colonel James R. Slack, the regiment's brigade commander, supervised bataillon drill, but many men were too sick to drill. Because so many men were becoming disabled by ague (malaria) in the swampy region, Dr. Ely began giving daily doses of eight grains of quinine to both the sick and the well with good results.¹¹

Hovey's division took the lead April 21, but it had to stop at Dunbar's Plantation until two bridges could be built across Bayou Vidal. The regiment commandeered a barn to protect them from a sudden rain

¹⁰Hoag Diary, April 19, 1863; Rigby Journal, April 19, 1863; Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, April 17, 1863.

¹¹Rigby Journal, April 20, 1863; Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 111.

storm. The next day the regiment lost their barn to the pioneer corps who tore it and everything else in the area down to build the bridges over the bayou. The former Belgian soldier, Lieutenant Lucas, marvelled at the speed at which the bridges were constructed. The pioneer corps had been hastily organized from details of men from each regiment in the division, and officers served as construction engineers. The men, working day and night in water at times up to their necks, bridged the bayou in two places with 500-foot floating causeways. On May 26 and 27 Hovey's division crossed the bayou and proceeded to Perkins Landing.¹²

In an officers' conference with Colonel Byam, Lieutenant Lucas learned that Hovey's division would probably lead an amphibious assault against the fortifications at Grand Gulf. The 12th Division under General Hovey would form the left wing of the attack, the 10th Division commanded by Brigadier General Peter Joseph Osterhaus formed the center, and the 14th Division under Brigadier General Eugene Asa Carr was the right wing. The 9th Division commanded by Brigadier General Andrew

¹²Rigby Journal, April 20, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), pp. 141, 145; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, pp. 141, 601. General McClernand was very impressed with Hovey's bridge work: "The last 5 miles of the route from Smith's to Perkins' Plantation was obstructed by numerous bayous. To accelerate the general movement General Hovey undertook the experiment of overcoming these obstacles but, in order to do so, he had to construct nearly 2,000 feet of bridging out of materials created, for the most part, on the occasion. This he did within the short space of three days and nights, thus extending and completing the great military road across the peninsula from the Mississippi above to the Mississippi 40 miles below Vicksburg. The achievement is one of the most remarkable occurring in the annals of War, and justly ranks among the highest examples of military energy and perseverance." McClernand's official report is typically flamboyant, but Hovey's men did accomplish some remarkable roadbuilding in a very short space of time.

Jackson Smith was to be the reserve for McClernand's XIII Corps.¹³

On April 28 the regiment was marched to the Mississippi River and crowded aboard one of the five transports there. The men had been issued sixty extra rounds of ammunition in addition to the forty they already carried and ten days' rations. According to Private Webb, this was a very heavy load. From a safe distance aboard their transport, the 24th watched a spectacular artillery duel the following morning between Admiral Porter's gunboats and the gun emplacements at Grand Gulf.¹⁴

The men were awed by what they witnessed. From Private Webb, who had never seen shelling, ". . . the river seemed on fire and the shells bursting in the air over the rebel marks and the rebel fire made it look beautiful. . . ." To Lucas, the veteran of European warfare, it was

. . . the grandest sight I ever witnessed in military affairs . . . a continuous roar . . . some shells exploding near our gunboats . . . appeared to make the water boil . . . solid shot would glance against our gunboats, then strike the water and like a ball seemed to bound half a dozen times or more and then sink to the bottom of the river.¹⁵

Unable to silence the guns at Grand Gulf, the troops were unloaded at Hard Times Landing and marched four miles overland. The next morning they were ferried across the Mississippi River by transports which had run past Grand Gulf during the night. The whole

¹³Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 146; Warner, Generals in Blue, pp. 70, 353, 454.

¹⁴Webb Record, April 28, 1863; Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 418.

¹⁵Webb Record, April 29, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 147.

operation was well thought of by Lieutenant Lucas:

The movement of our fleet running the blockade was well planned and well executed, and shows how our commander must be a military genius. Grand Gulf was very strongly fortified, and it would have been next to impossible to take it by storm and it was wise of Gen. Grant not to undertake it.¹⁶

McClelland's XIII Corps was landed at Bruinsburg Landing, Mississippi, about ten miles below Grand Gulf and sent immediately inland toward Port Gibson where Brigadier General J. S. Bowen had 6,000 Confederate troops waiting to receive them. The divisions of Carr and Osterhaus took the advance while Hovey and Smith followed with their divisions in close support. At the landing the men received three days' rations of hard bread, sugar, coffee, and salt, and the 24th Iowa marched inland from four in the afternoon until nine that night when they stopped for supper.¹⁷

Thad Smith wrote:

Marching all night on the rear of Grand Gulf, skirmishers could be heard in advance all night. Halting at Thompson Hill the troops' breakfast was interrupted when the General (Hovey) ordered them to advance. Osterhaus and Carr being already partly engaged the division formed two lines of battle on the right of Magnolia Church.

The country was exceedingly broken, there being a continuous succession of knobs and precipitate hillsides, while almost impenetrable canebrakes choked up the deep, narrow ravines. . . .¹⁸

Private Webb described the 24th Iowa's first encounter with the enemy:

At 1:00 A. M. heard firing from the advanced guard and this

¹⁶Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 148.

¹⁷Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, p. 601; Catton, Grant Moves South, pp. 425-26; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 28.

¹⁸Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 28.

livened the boys now within 3 mi. of the rebel force--at 5 in the morning halted for breakfast--formed in line of battle back of the skirmishers who were at work finding out where the rebels lay--laid in a line about an hour while the firing became heavier--order to move forward--did so eagerly to see the fun--moved forward about a mile and formed in a line of battle--here we throw down knapsacks beside the road and carried nothing but canteens and haversacks--here the grape and canister flew over us tolerable freely--we laid here about an hour during this time had found their den out and musketry became one continual roar it seemed as tho all the rebels in hell was turned loose the balls whistled around us quite brisk now the order came forward double quick this was done as quick as ordered we went around a point of timber which brought us in full range of the rebels guns on we went at the double The shot and shell fell like hail around us We past this way two hundred yard and formed at the bottom of a hill with in two hundred yards of a rebel battery of fore guns the musketry had held up a little at the present but the grape and canister rattled through the lines just above our heads here we laid about fifteen or twenty minutes General Hovey and Colonel Slack came along the line here and Slack wanted the 24th to charge on the battery, but Cameron claimed the privilege of taking it was his regiment and swore he would stand a court marshal for he would give it up so Slack gave way to him this was an ugly charge for at the start there was a lane to cross and two fences to climb but the men went over and as they went over the minie balls came thick and the roar of musketry was deafing to hear another regiment went over the fence and then the 11th Indiana went and then it came our turn to go we cleared the fence and not a man hurt in our company but two in company "A" Now the melee rang with the wild cheers as they rushed forward now the work really commenced the foremost regiment was with in fifty feet of the rebel battery and yelling like wild men and all this time we was under rebel fire and couldn't return it but we rushed forward and before the work was done we past the 11th Indiana and one other regiment and came up to the battery just as the work was done we had gone through a cane thicket and that hindered us some in our charge--there was two hundred prisoners taken and two rebel guns and a banner¹⁹

Amasa Allen was upset that the regiment had been badly separated in the charge through the canebreak because, in his opinion, Colonel Byam

¹⁹Webb Record, May 1, 1863; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, pp. 602-03. General Hovey's official report agrees basically with Webb's Record. The General claims the 34th Indiana led the charge followed by the 56th Ohio and two companies of the 11th Indiana and several other companies from other regiments. Hovey reports between 200 and 300 prisoners were taken along with two 12-pound howitzers, three caissons and three 6-mule teams loaded with ammunition. Brigade Commander Slack's official report states that it was Lieutenant Colonel William Raynor of the 56th Ohio who took possession of the rebel flag, and they captured 220 prisoners.

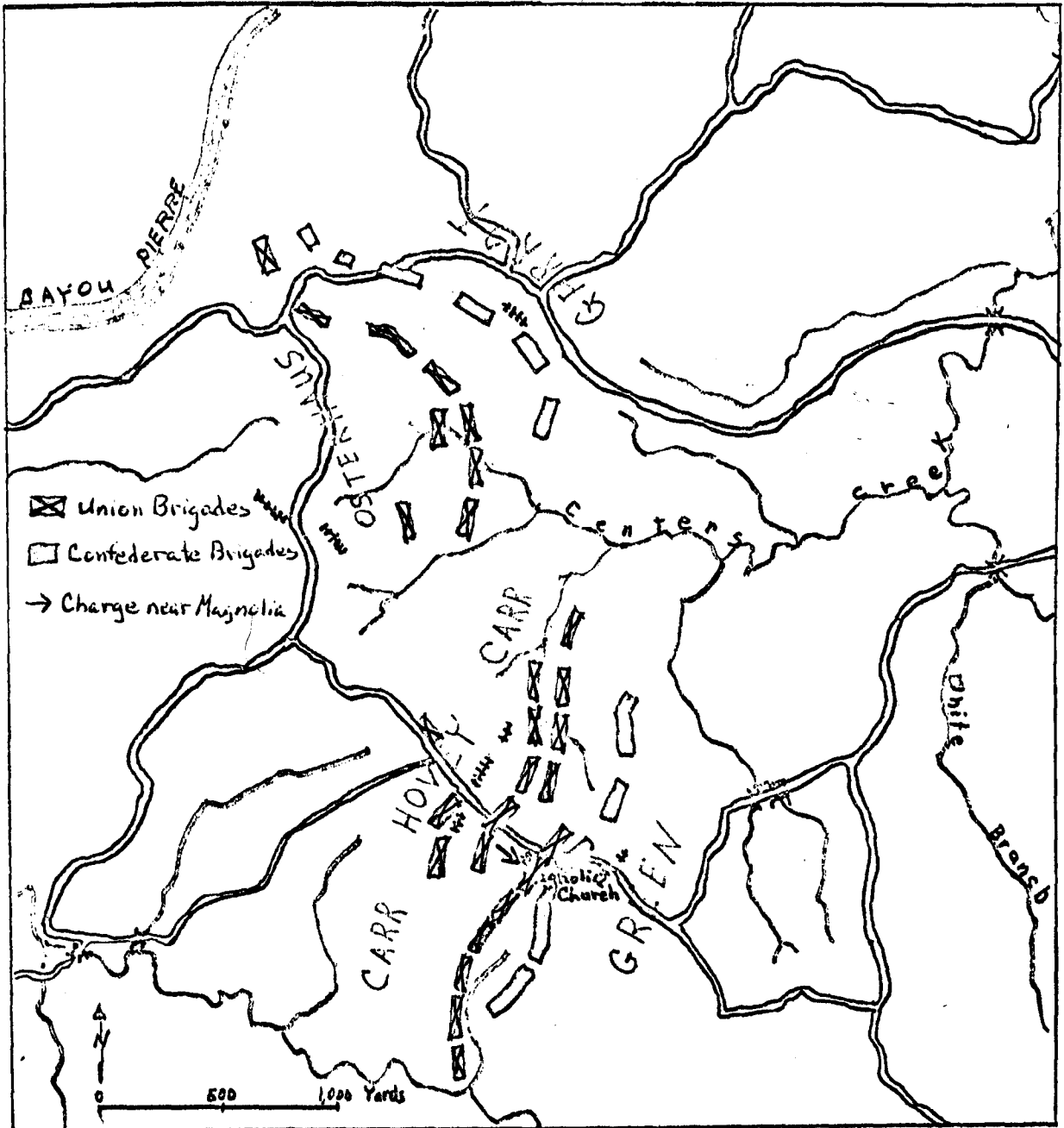


Figure 4.3. Battle of Port Gibson, Morning. Map adapted from Fowler, *Struggle for Vicksburg*, p. 30.

was not "standing up to the rack." He continued, ". . . he is not the man to hitch to in a tight place. Lieutenant Colonel Wilds and Major Ed Wright are men that wont flinch in a tight place; they lead us through the fight."²⁰

Smith explained Colonel Byam's absence caused some problems:

Lieut. Col. Wilds, presuming Col. Byam to be at the center of the regiment and regulating the line there, mistook the colors of the 28th Iowa for our own and followed them with the four right companies. But it was afterwards ascertained that Col. Byam had left the field, having become sick and faint, and much to his own injury had failed to have the fact reported to Col. Wild, upon which the command now devoled. Major Wright on the left, with the colors and the six remaining companies, bore to the left in order to pass around the canebrake, thus dividing the regiment. A similar accident happened to the 24th Indiana of the first brigade.

The six companies under Major Wright and five companies of the 24th Indiana arrived first in an open space beyond the cane brakes. Here General Hovey ordered Col. Cameron of the 24th Indiana to charge a battery which the enemy had planted on the crest of the hill. Col. Cameron remarked that there were but five companies present, but that he would charge it if the General so ordered.

Col. Slack, commanding our brigade, proposed uniting the two parts of regiments. To this the General objected, desiring that our regiment should do it. Col. Slack then egerly responded: 'Then let the 24th Iowa go in. Six companies can do it. The Hawkeyes will do it.' But the General refused, and the remaining five companies of the 24th arrived soon after the regiment was ordered to advance to the charge. About this same time two regiments of Carr's division, the 8th and 18th Indiana, charged the same point from another direction, the three regiments carrying the point, and each claiming the honor of the victory.²¹

²⁰Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, May 5, 1863.

²¹Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), pp. 29-30; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, pp. 602, 611. In General Hovey's Report the controversy was with Slack. "I pointed out the battery first to Colonel Cameron, and told him it must be taken. Colonel Slack claimed the honor for his command, but I settled the matter by directing Colonel Cameron, Thirty-fourth Indiana Regiment, to make the charge, and Lieutenant Colonel Raynor, Fifty-sixth Ohio, to support it." Colonel Slack's report contains nothing of the controversy.

Smith ended his criticism of Colonel Byam with:

It is not necessary to criticise the conduct of Col. Byam in this engagement. It is perhaps, fair to presume that what he said of himself was true. He was sick and faint, or as the boys would have it, sun-struck at 8 o'clock in the morning reporting at the hospital, two miles away for medical assistance.²²

After helping to carry the hill near Magnolia Church, the 24th Iowa was given a brief rest, and Rigby got permission to return to where they had dropped their haversacks and collect B Company's gear. Rigby described the battlefield so recently passed over:

On my way I stopped at the various hospitals where I saw the first horrors of war. Here were men wounded in every conceivable form. The sight was sickening and I went on my way mentally enquiring, 'When shall men learn war no more.' I got to our things but hearing musket fire in the place I just left I took up several haversacks and my gum blanket and started back. Passing through a deep ravine I saw the ravages of our batteries in the enemies ranks. Many wounded were strown about and the dead were almost in piles. I had left my gun with Martin and knowing he would not be able to take care of it, I went to where I had left it hoping it might still be there but found it gone. Picking up another gun I started on. Very fortunately I came across our Adjutant who was also separated from the reg't and together we set out in search of it. At last we found Co. B & G which were giving out blue pills in the most approved style. Here I had a good chance to check out my new gun which proved excellant.²³

While Rigby was gone the regiment was called into action again.

Webb reported:

We rested till about twelve when the firing was heard in the front again the rebels had been reinforced ordered to move forward we went about a mile and a half and formed in line of battle behind a battery and it made it a warm place here we had one man wounded in our company by a shell bursting over us we didn't lay here long before Luetenant Conal Wilds came back to our company and called out company b, g, and k follow me and started off at the double quick we went over a hill and down a hollow where our guns fired over us he took us to support some infantry that was prest to hard this suited us fine for we had been under rebles fire all day and couldn't return and now we had a chance to pay it back we

²²Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 30.

²³Rigby Journal, May 1, 1863.

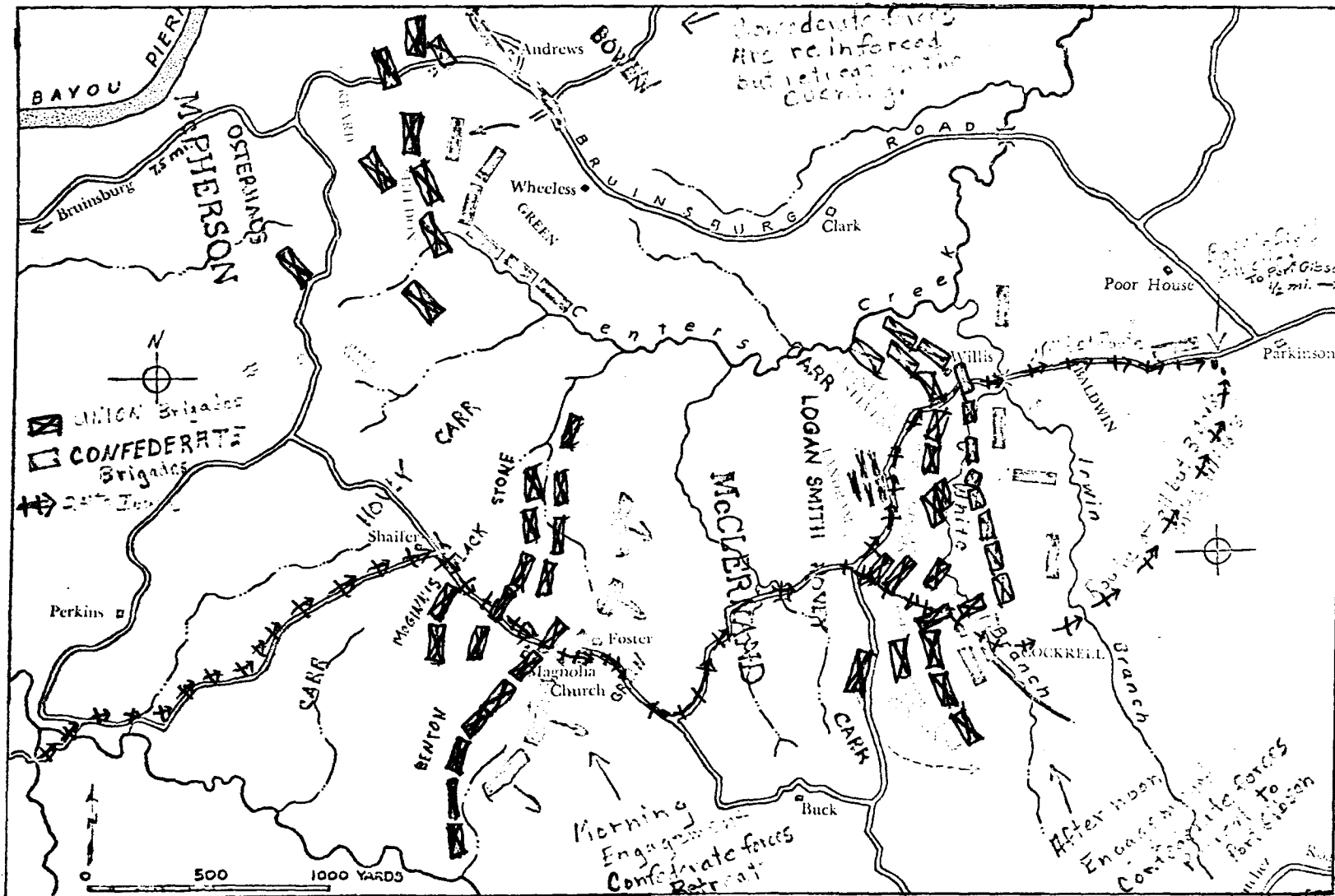


Figure 4.4. Battle of Port Gibson. Map adapted from Fowler, *Struggle for Vicksburg*, p. 31.

moved up to the brow of the hill where we could see them over on the other hill where the rest of the regiment joined us and then we was taken to support another batery and laid there till the evening.²⁴

Private Allen was not a member of one of the companies chosen to follow Lieutenant Colonel Wilds, and Allen was disappointed he had missed out on most of the afternoon's fighting.

The 24th was ordered to support the Peoria Bateria we lay down clost to the Bateria but the Rebs got rang of us and the shells was flying thick when Gen. Hovey came and ordered our Reg. to change positions or we would get all cut to pieces we moved a few rods and was out of the range of the guns We lay there a short time and was ordered the double quick about 80 rods through the fire of the enemy and lay down in front of one of our Bateries we got to fire only two rounds through the whole day they kept us as support of Bateries.²⁵

The Confederates withdrew as night approached, and the weary members of the 24th Iowa made camp still supporting the Peoria Battery. The men were able to find supper by searching through the haversacks which littered the field, and some like Rigby even found a quilt to roll up in. Exhausted from their first real battle and tired from thirty-six hours without sleep, the regiment slept soundly on the battlefield. The men were proud of their performance in the face of enemy fire and now felt they could take their places among the veterans of 1861 who had previously led the assaults.²⁶

The engagement that took place on May 1, 1863, was known as the

²⁴Webb Record, May 1, 1863.

²⁵Ibid.; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, p. 611. Webb was undoubtedly reporting the 24th Iowa's role while supporting Major General Logan's division. Logan's division had been transferred to McClernand's corps early in the conflict to help flank the enemy. Later Colonel Slack had ordered the 24th and 28th Iowa to Logan's support when things bogged down on Logan's front.

²⁶Rigby Journal, May 1, 1863; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 30.

Battle of Port Gibson. Grant's forces numbered about 24,000 men and 60 guns, while Brigadier General John S. Bowen opposed Grant with about 9,000 men and 16 guns. The Confederates fought a brilliant delaying action costing Grant's army 18 hours and 800 casualties, but eventually superior numbers won out. Had Bowen received adequate reinforcements, the Confederates might have driven the Union army back to the river. But the chance was missed, and Grant had won a critical battle in the Vicksburg Campaign.²⁷

The following morning the pursuing Federals found Port Gibson and Grand Gulf evacuated. The retreating Rebels had burned the bridges across Bayou Pierre, and Lieutenant Colonel James H. Wilson began another of the famous bridge building projects. While the men in McPherson's and McClernand's corps waited for the bridge to be rebuilt, Sherman's corps was being hurried forward by way of Milliken's Bend, New Carthage, and Grand Gulf.²⁸

After a hearty breakfast the 24th left its battlefield bivouac expecting another day of hard fighting. The Confederates were gone, however, and the men marched lightheartedly to Port Gibson, arriving about noon. Port Gibson was a nice little town with streets ninety feet wide and a row of live oak trees on each side. After stacking arms in the street which would serve as their campground, the regiment was issued strict orders not to harm the property of local inhabitants. Despite orders, sugar, geese, chickens, and fence boards were jayhawked with ease.²⁹

²⁷Fowler, Struggle for Vicksburg, pp. 13-17.

²⁸Ibid., p. 17.

²⁹Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 40; Lucas,

Rigby and his cousin Martin explored the town. They marvelled at the beautiful gardens and took freely from a strawberry patch. The women were described as being very secesh, and not caring what they said. The regiment responded by serenading the ladies with Union songs. Prisoners held in the town seemed to be in poor health with nothing to eat in their haversacks but corncakes. Most complained of the heat, one saying, "You Yankees picked a damn hot day to fight."³⁰

Jesse Rigby, another of Alfred's cousins, returned from the battlefield with a mule laden with Company B's baggage which he had been sent to collect. Jesse reported that while the Union dead were receiving a decent burial, the Rebels were often piled in gullies and covered with brush and dirt. The troops were collecting guns that were scattered all over the field, and stragglers were cutting open knapsacks and taking everything of value. Alfred felt, "Everyone thus engaged should be shot in his tracks."³¹

Reflecting on the battle Rigby wrote:

My feelings were different from what I expected upon entering the battlefield. I felt as composed as I ever did. When forming in line many of the boys would dodge at the firing of our cannon which rather excited by visibilities. We were under fire at several different points and some very dangerous positions.

I am sorry to say that many attempted to shirk but I think less out of new reg'ts than old. Our company was disgraced by one contemptible shirk. Very likely he will be remembered. The negroes tell us that the sabbath previous to the fight the preacher told them that the yankees would cut off the hands & feet of the niggers

Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), pp. 151-52.

³⁰Rigby Journal, May 2, 1863; Webb Record, May 2, 1863; Hoag Diary, May 2, 1863.

³¹Rigby Journal, May 2, 1863.

and eat the children alive. The citizens turned out in mass to fight us. Oh how I could sack & burn!³²

On Sunday, May 3, Company B's newly acquired mule was put to work carrying blankets and haversacks. The bridges across Bayou Pierre were completed, and McClernand's corps was moving forward to Willow Springs to await the arrival of Sherman's men. The 24th Iowa's new campsite was poor in terms of water, having only a "vermon ridden pond and a small cistern." The troops were also nearly out of rations, but the surrounding countryside was providing everything they wanted except hardtack bread or crackers. The troops often went seven or eight miles from camp to forage. Although they refrained from burning homes or cotton, deserted mansions were often looted, and horses and carriages were confiscated to bring in the prizes. Jayhawked provisions included: tobacco, molasses, parched corn, chickens, "nigger" beans, sweet potatoes, bacon, ham, honey, corn meal, sugar, and even wild mulberries.³³

While southern gentlemen seemed to Thad Smith much like Turkish princes, offering a cool but polite reception to the jayhawkers, "the women were less guarded in their manners and language, and frequently treated us to a torrent of abuse, unequaled since the days of Shakespeare's Queen Margaret of Lancaster." The troops usually just laughed while they took what they wanted. It seemed strange to Smith that these foraging parties were never attacked or disturbed in any way.³⁴

³²Ibid.

³³Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 40; Rigby Journal, May 3, 5, and 6, 1863; Webb Record, May 4, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 152; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 33.

³⁴Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 33.

Hovey's division made a curious procession May 6 as they marched the eight miles to Rocky Springs. "Every team from five hundred dollar coaches to the saddest dray is impressed along our march . . . we have sufficient secesh teams to carry our blankets." Advancing McClernand's corps to Rocky Springs, Grant was preparing his next grand move. May 8 a review was held for General Grant by Hovey's division. Cheered all along the line, Grant issued a special order thanking his troops for the bravery they had displayed in gaining the victory at Port Gibson, which Grant considered the "Key to Vicksburg." Lieutenant Lucas felt the men had confidence in their leader and that that was half the battle. Grant himself had confidence because Sherman's XV Corps had arrived, and the army was now ready to move.³⁵

McClernand's corps kept moving northeasterly, screening McPherson's and Sherman's movements toward Raymond and Jackson. Arriving six miles southwest of Jackson May 12, the XIII Corps was drawn up in line of battle with Hovey's division in front. Skirmishers were sent out, but it was all a feint attack to help screen the advance on Raymond and Jackson. Hovey's division skirmished sharply near Edwards Station on May 12 and 13.³⁶

The 24th Iowa passed through Raymond May 14, following up McPherson's corps which had won the battle there on the 12th. The roads were nearly impassable from the steady rain, but Hovey's division went trudging along toward Clinton. Although there was still plenty of meat

³⁵Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 40; Rigby Journal, May 6, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1900), p. 152; Catton, Never Call Retreat, p. 198.

³⁶Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, pp. 40-41; Fowler, Struggle for Vicksburg, pp. 20-21.

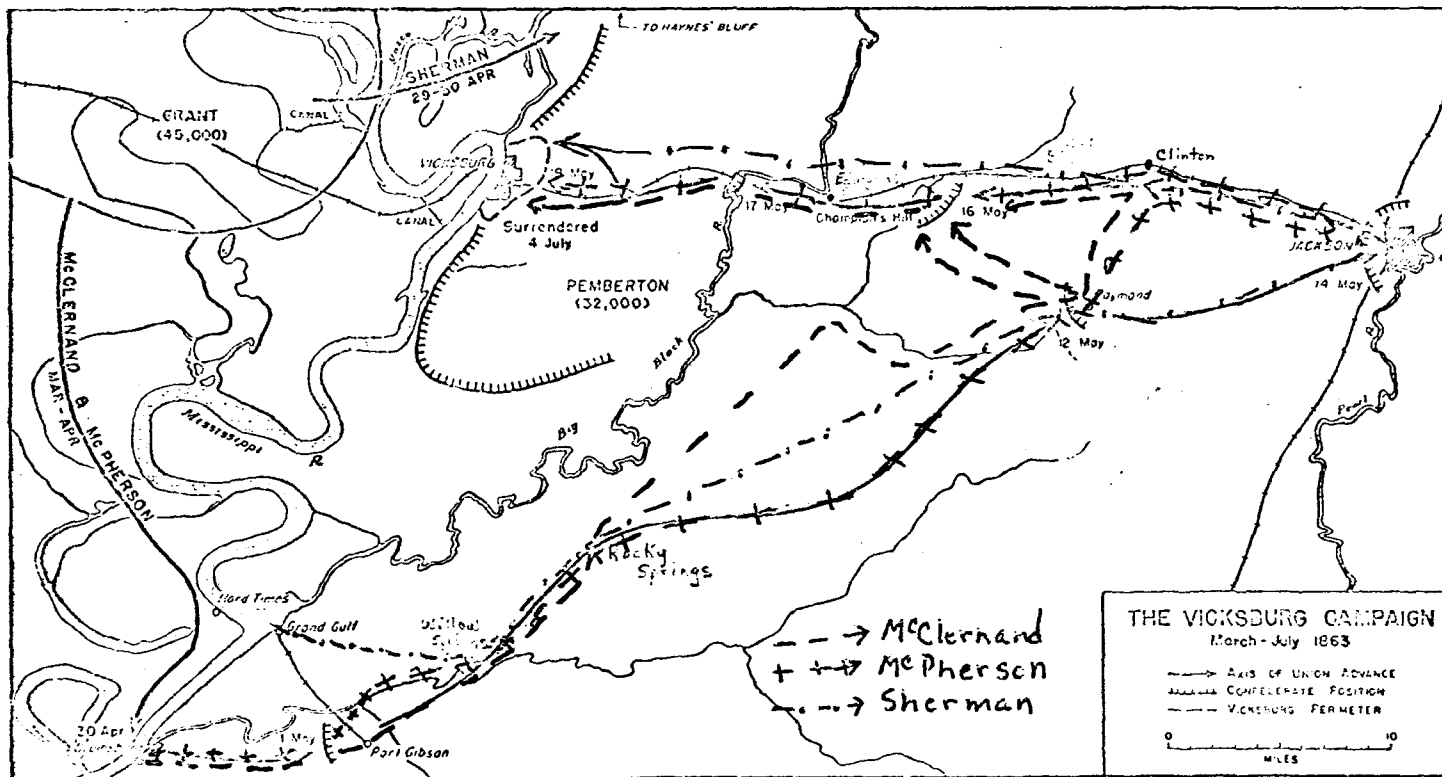


Figure 4.5. Troop movement in the Vicksburg Campaign. Map adapted from Matloff, *American Military History*, p. 238.

to be had, meal and hard bread were scarce. Negroes welcomed the regiment everywhere; the white population warned of the terrible defense awaiting them at Vicksburg.³⁷

After the capture of Jackson on May 14, McClernand was ordered to move his divisions west to Bolton. General Pemberton was finally making a decisive move to cut Grant's supply line. On the morning of May 16, McClernand's corps converged on the Confederate forces at Champion's Hill. Pemberton's choice of battlefields was well suited to defend. One of the highest points in the region, it commanded all of the ground to the north and southeast.³⁸

McClernand's divisions were spread out along three major roads, which all converged on Bolton and passed over Champion's Hill. A. J. Smith's division, combined with Frank Blair's division which had arrived too late to reach Sherman's corps, led the advance on the southernmost road. Osterhaus and Carr approached on the middle road. Hovey's division led the attack on the Vicksburg-Jackson road with McPherson hurrying Logan's and Crocker's divisions forward in support. Hovey's division, the weakest attack force numerically, would suffer the most in the desperate and decisive Battle of Champion Hill.³⁹

Colonel Byam apparently filed no official report of the Battle of Champion's Hill and of the role of the 24th Iowa in it. Colonel Slack, the 24th's brigade commander, did however include an overview of

³⁷Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 41; Rigby Journal, May 11, 12, and 13, 1863; Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1863), p. 34.

³⁸Fowler, Struggle for Vicksburg, pp. 24-26.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 26, 43-45.

the 24th Iowa's role in his official report.⁴⁰

A more complete account of the 24th Iowa's part in the Battle of Champion's Hill was recorded in a letter written by Second Lieutenant Charles A. Lucas of Company D to his brother on May 17. Lucas, the Belgian immigrant, took an active role in the fighting and even provided his brother with a map to help explain the action taken by his regiment in the battle. Lucas wrote:

On May 16, at 8 A. M. we left our bivouac of the night before. We marched a short distance, probably two or three miles, in the direction of Edwards' Depot, and at 10:45 A. M. we halted and formed in line of battle. I was immediately sent on the skirmish line with my Company--Company "D", and Captain Martin of Company "I" was on the reserve with his company. We advanced cautiously across the timber, keeping the right of our line joining the left of the 56th Ohio on our right, for about two miles, when we were ordered to assemble on the right and rejoin our regiment which was then in a ravine where you see marked on my map '24th Iowa before going into the fight.' It was then noon. While we were rejoining the regiment, there was already firing of artillery and musketry on our right. The skirmishers on our right had discovered the enemy in strong force. We were then on the northeast edge of the battle field.

Half an hour later our regiment was ordered to move on the enemy. We advanced in good order across timber and underbrush, hills and ravines, for three-fourths of a mile when we crossed, or rather passed through, the ranks of the 47th Indiana, which was in front of us, and had been driving the enemy. We then kept advancing and soon came to a house and garden, the garden being enclosed with a picket fence. A part of our company passed to the right, and the other part to the left of that garden, reforming immediately after. Soon after we passed that house and garden a rebel battery of five guns opened on us with grape and canister. We were then about one and one-fourth miles from where we were, when ordered to move on the enemy; and right there our regiment came to a halt, without any command being heard to do so. Some of the men laid down and fired, while others fired from behind trees. It was then a terrible moment, because besides the battery, it looked as if there was at least one thousand infantry supporting it. We were then close to two hundred yards from the battery and we had to cross a road to reach it, but I knew it was no time for us to stay there, as we might all get killed and do no good; and I thought it was best to try to take the battery, in double quick, and without hesitating an instant I jumped

⁴⁰Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, pp. 55-56.

Figure 4.6. Lucas' Sketch of the Battle of Champion's Hill. A map adapted from Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 174. The map was drawn by Lucas as a guide.

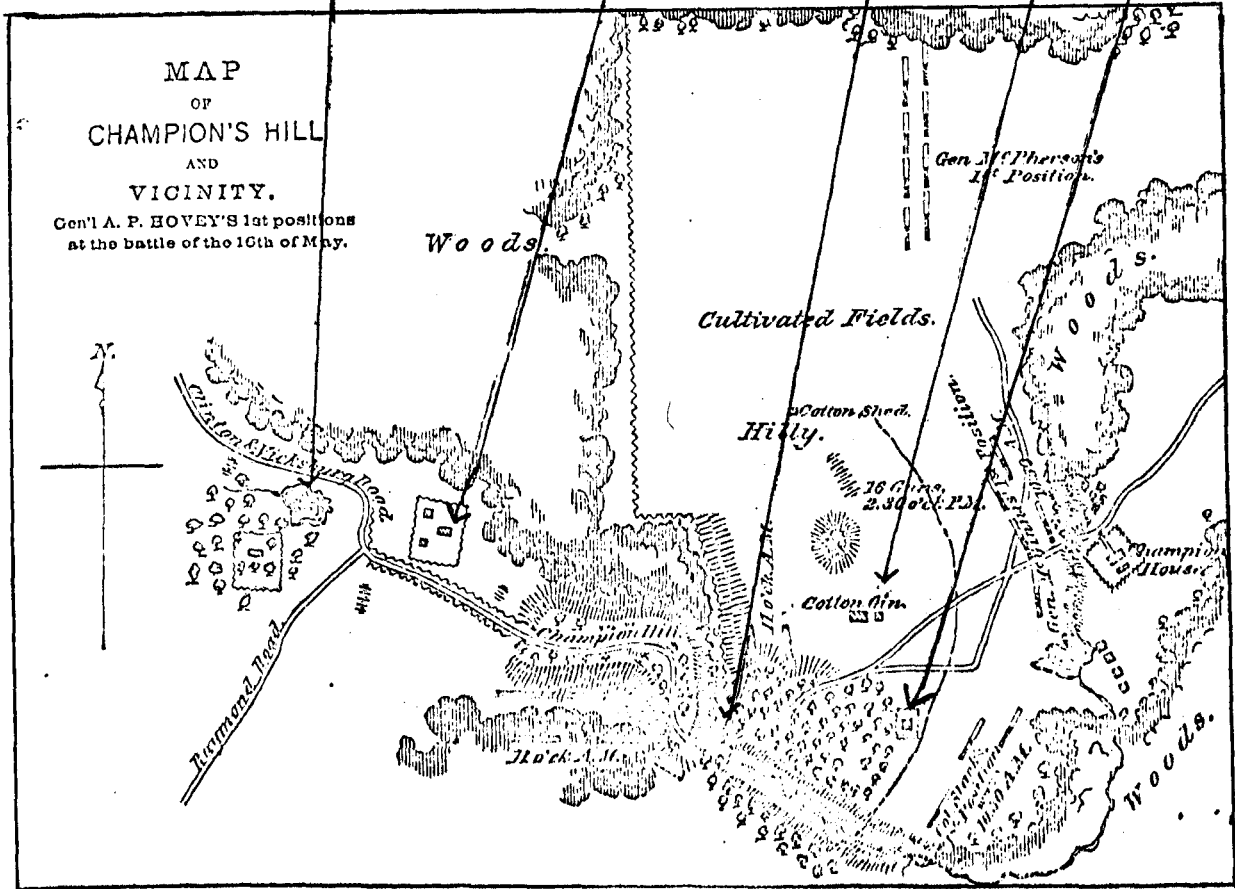
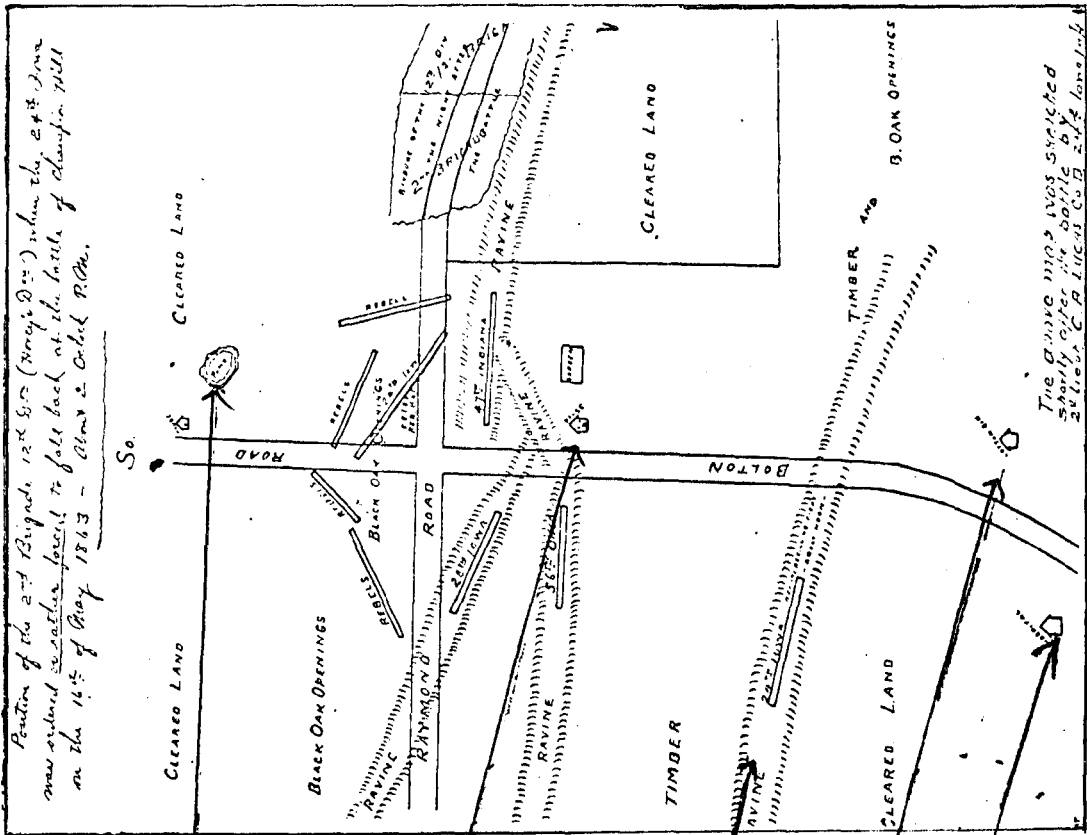


Figure 4.7. Hovey's sketch of the Battle of Champion's Hill. Map adapted from the Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 43, Lucas' sketch differs somewhat from the one in Hovey's report but many of the land marks are common to both.

in front of my company--Company "D"--in front of the men I had from organization drilled faithfully in all kinds of drill, especially in skirmish drill and bayonet exercise, and in whom I had a good deal of confidence, and although they had never before been tried in a charge with bayonet against the enemy, yet, I was confident they would follow me anywhere on a battle field. And then with my sword pointing towards the battery, and in as loud a voice as I could I shouted, 'Now is the time boys! Fix bayonet! Let us run and take that battery!' The whole regiment joined with Company "D," and with a yell common to Iowa men, and such as is given by men who run for victory or death, we did run and never stopped until we got the battery.

I think we were about two hundred yards from the battery, when we started to charge on it, but what was my great surprise, when we got over half the distance, to see the infantry that was supporting that battery, rise up on a sudden like a cloud of men, break and run before us, as if they thought a whole division was coming upon them; and as they were running through a corn field, we had a good chance to fire a few volleys at them; and if we had been supported by fresh troops, as we should have been, the day would have been ours, right then and there. We were then advancing in a south-westerly direction. Our regiment kept following the enemy, in the corn field, twelve or fifteen rods beyond the battery, advancing at the same time in a little more westerly direction, as we could see rebel reinforcement coming mostly from that direction.

But we had no support, and the rebels firing on us from the front and both flanks, and Lieutenant Colonel Wilds--who was then in command during the temporary absence of Colonel Byam--fearing that we would soon be annihilated or surrounded, ordered us to fall back to the foot of the Hill, and reform there; and the enemy soon recaptured the battery. And when we got to the foot of the hill, Lieutenant Colonel Wilds took temporary hold of the regiment flag, so as to more encourage the men to reform the line.

Reinforcements soon came for us, however, and together with them we moved forward again. The enemy's line quickly broke, and they were soon in full retreat. The final capture of that battery was about 3:30 P. M. but the battle lasted til close to 5:30 P. M. At that hour General Sherman's Army Corps came from Jackson, just in time to cut off the enemy's retreat. Our victory was complete, although it cost dear to us, and especially to our division. We took 2,000 prisoners and thirty pieces of artillery. As much as I can ascertain, the losses of our regiment are forty-five killed, 134 wounded and twenty-two missing. Total 201, out of 417 engaged.⁴¹

Hovey's division had finally been supported by Brigadier General Marcellus M. Crocker's division, which contained many Iowa regiments.

⁴¹Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), pp. 172-74.

Brigadier John A. Logan's division, also from McPherson's corps, brought relief from the right, and the other four divisions in McClernand's command finally made the attack on the left flank. Although the engagement remained a bloody melee until the middle of the afternoon, the weight of numbers once again forced Pemberton to retreat before Logan's division cut off the escape route back to Vicksburg. Many members of the 24th Iowa fought in scattered units and as individuals with Crocker's relief division. The regiment as a fighting unit, however, was shattered and made camp the night of the 16th on the battlefield to regroup and to take toll of their losses. The advance had stopped at Baker's Creek about dark, and the regiment soon found about half of their number were either killed, wounded, or missing.⁴²

Private Shanklin, like most in the 24th, would always remember the wild charge on the enemy battery. Writing his wife, he recalled:

Nancy the 24 reg taken a battery when I got up to the old cannon I could of noct the enemy down with a stone we was so close to them they fought like Tigers if they had stood one minet longer we would had to strung them on our bayonets as they ran from there baterys we just moed them down I forgot that they could shoot me all I thought of was to Kill all of them I could⁴³

Another incident, recounted by many about the battle, was the wounding of Major Ed Wright. Immediately after the charge on the battery Major Wright was severely wounded across the thighs, making it impossible for him to walk. While the regiment was still advancing beyond the battery, the Major saw one of the Confederate gunners, who had been "playing possum," attempting to escape capture by slipping off

⁴²Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 44; Fowler, Struggle for Vicksburg, pp. 43-44.

⁴³Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, May 17, 1863.

the field. Although unarmed himself, Major Wright challenged the man to stop and yield. The artilleryman halted and surrendered whereupon Wright, putting his arm around the captive's neck and leaning on his prisoner for support, proceeded to the field hospital.⁴⁴

Perhaps the most controversial subject in the regiment was who ordered the charge on the battery. Thad Smith contended, "Captain Martin of Company I, discovering the exact position of the battery, pointed it out to Col. Byam, who after consulting a moment with Lieut. Col. Wilds, ordered it to be charged."⁴⁵ After the war Charles Lucas claimed he approached Captain Martin and said:

'Captain Martin we do not see any field officer. It is no time for us to stay here; we will all get killed and to no good! We should take that battery!' I do not remember what answer he gave me, but without waiting one instant, and with my revolver in one hand, and my sword in the other I jumped in front of Company "D" . . . with my sword pointing toward the battery, I gave the following command; 'Now is the time boys! Fix bayonet! Let us run and take the battery!!' Colonel Byam could not have ordered the charge on the rebel battery because he had retired to the rear ill.⁴⁶

Thad Smith conceded that Colonel Byam's account of Champion's Hill varied greatly with those from other people present. Byam claimed that he had led the charge on the battery, waving his felt hat which was blown to bits and had offered a five dollar reward for the pieces. None in the regiment seemed to be able to recall this feat.⁴⁷

The daring act of charging the battery had cost the 24th Iowa severely. Advancing alone and without proper arrangements for support, the regiment became the object of a concentrated cross-fire which drove it back in disorder. As Captain Martin led the evening prayer meeting

⁴⁴Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), pp. 117-18.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁶Lucas Letter, March 5, 1894.

⁴⁷Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 124.

that night after roll call, the men reflected on the nearness of death. Perhaps Private Shanklin spoke the thoughts of many when he wrote, "I thought that Port Gibson was a hard fight but it wasn't nothing to the side of this."⁴⁸

Of the fifty-five officers and men in Company A, Thad Smith tallied thirty-one killed and wounded. Smith placed the regiment's loss high with forty-five dead on the field, thirty-nine dying from wounds, and twenty-eight crippled for life. Besides this 112, he noted forty who were severely wounded, twenty more slightly wounded and twelve who were captured, making a total of 193. A total of 417 men had been engaged with all companies represented except B, which had been previously detailed as provost guard at General McClernand's headquarters. While Smith's figures were higher than the official ones, his total was comparable. If the total number of effectives was accurate in Smith's computation, the loss of the 24th Iowa was over 45 per cent of the number engaged.⁴⁹

Colonel Slack's official report for the 2nd Brigade 12th Division 13th Corps is summarized in Table 3.

The total loss in both brigades of General Hovey's 12th Division was 1,202 of the 4,180 men engaged. Hovey felt his division loss was one of the worst suffered during the war in a four hour period.⁵⁰

⁴⁸William F. Fox, Regimental Losses in the American Civil War (Albany, N. Y.: Albany Publishing Co., 1889), p. 412 (hereinafter referred to as Regimental Losses); Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 117; Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, May 17, 1863.

⁴⁹Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 117.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 45-46.

Table 3
Report of Killed, Wounded, and Missing
at Battle of Champion's Hill

Regiment	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
47th Indiana	32	91	17	140
56th Ohio	20	90	28	138
24th Iowa	35	120	34	189
28th Iowa	21	62	14	97
1st Missouri Battery	--	2	--	2
	—	—	—	—
Total	108	365	93	566

Source: Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II,
p. 57.

William Fox ranked six regiments in Hovey's division among the eight regiments that lost the greatest number of men in killed, wounded, and missing at Champion's Hill. The 24th Iowa was ranked first for the battle in the number killed and mortally wounded with seventy-five. Thomas Livermore listed the Battle of Champion's Hill as the fourteenth most costly in Union victories. If the losses of Hovey's, Logan's, and Crocker's divisions, which did most of the fighting, are taken separately the battle ranks fifth.⁵¹

As a result of the great loss of men in Hovey's division, his regiments remained in camp May 17 on the battle field. The 24th Iowa's dead were buried in trenches five feet deep and six feet wide. The wounded were taken to the division hospital and placed in the care of regimental surgeon Ely and his staff.⁵² Over 700 wounded were cared for in an improvised plantation house. According to Ely:

A few of the most severe cases and those requiring capital and other larger operation, were taken into the house; the others were placed in the shade, where for each one a soft bed was provided by first placing on the ground several layers of the cotton bale, and covering this with the rubber poncho of the wounded man. The peculiar advantage of this rubber covering was appreciated by all, as for some days after, more or less, water dressings were used on all wounds.⁵³

Meanwhile the remainder of McClernand's corps and McPherson's divisions drove forward to Black River Bridge where, on the 17th, Pemberton's army was again beaten and forced to retreat into earthworks

⁵¹Fox, Regimental Losses, pp. 18-22, 437; Thomas L. Livermore, Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America 1861-1865 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1901), pp. 76, 99. Hereinafter referred to as Numbers and Losses.

⁵²Coutts, Cedar County Historical Review (July, 1965), pp. 57-59.

⁵³Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 112.

protecting Vicksburg. Sherman, moving to the right with his corps, had reached Haynes' Bluff overlooking the Yazoo River. Now Grant had a supply base north of Vicksburg. After two successful assaults, Grant's army settled down for the siege of Vicksburg.⁵⁴

On May 19 the 24th moved its camp to the Black River Bridge, twelve miles from Vicksburg, to act as a blocking force against the approach of a Confederate army reportedly gathering at Jackson, Mississippi, under General Joseph E. Johnston. Johnston was threatening to attack Grant's army to break the siege of Vicksburg.⁵⁵ While camped on the west bank of the Black River, the regiment was joined by Dr. Ely himself, fleeing capture by Johnston's cavalry. Dr. Ely continued his narrative:

On the 27th of May the Twenty-fourth was with the rest of the division, on the line of investment in the rear of Vicksburg. Here it remained, taking active part in the siege till the surrender of this stronghold in July following. Its location, like most of our forces on the line, was in ravines and the men suffered greatly at first by the use of the impure surface water obtained most anywhere at the depth of two to three feet. None other was to be had. On our arrival here, eighteen were on the sick list; the third day after the number was seventy. Instructions were given to use the water only after being boiled. It was thus used in tea and coffee for ordinary drink. The effect of this precaution was soon apparent in the good health of the regiment.⁵⁶

The first week of June, 1863, Dr. Ely resigned his commission as surgeon because of disability and returned to Iowa. Colonel Byam also left the regiment on June 8, 1863, for another leave of absence. Many hoped he would resign since he had been present only two months

⁵⁴Catton, Never Call Retreat, pp. 201-03.

⁵⁵Shedenhelm Notes, May 19, 1863; Catton, Never Call Retreat, p. 204; Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 112.

⁵⁶Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 112.

with the regiment, and there was a great deal of criticism of his absence under fire. Charles Lucas felt Byam was not a natural regimental commander and when the colonel became aware of his poor health he should have resigned.⁵⁷

Even with his leave of absence and subsequent resignation it is clear from a letter to Governor Kirkwood that relations between Byam and his staff officers were far from harmonious.

A few days after your visit to Vicksburg I was taken violently ill with abux. Doctors expected me to die but I didn't. I obtained a leave of absence but when that was up my doctor advised me to resign which I have done. I have one last appointment to ask and that is Capt. Wm. W. Smith of Co. "G" for Major. He is the best man in the regiment for that place. I ask this because I think it is due him. He has merited it. Major Wright is the best man for Colonel. Wilds is neither reliable nor competent. I will talk to you personally about these statements in the future.⁵⁸

Whatever his conversation with Byam included, Governor Kirkwood was not inclined to promote Major Wright over Wilds, and when a new major was appointed it was Leander Clark, not Smith. Kirkwood had visited Vicksburg early in June, 1863, to see the Iowa troops first-hand and to see the siege operation. The governor probably was well aware after this visit of the command situation and of the men's attitude toward Byam, Wilds, and Wright.⁵⁹

The 24th Iowa's position in the line of investment was one mile below the Vicksburg-Jackson Railroad, occupying rifle pits on a spur east of Square Fort. Arriving on the 24th the regiment missed the

⁵⁷Ibid.; Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 124; Lucas Letter, March 5, 1894.

⁵⁸24th Iowa Correspondence, Col. E. Byam to Gov. Kirkwood, Aug. 26, 1863.

⁵⁹Hoag Diary, June 4, 1863.

assault on the earthworks by two days, and the men settled down with the rest of Grant's army for the siege. For the next forty days the men endured the hardships, dangers, and privations incident to the siege of the Rebel stronghold.⁶⁰

The siege was tedious at best and often deadly. Miles of trenches were dug at acute angles to the fortifications, developing a network of fairly safe approaches to the enemy's outer lines. The opposing lines were often only a few yards apart in the later stages of the siege. Because of the constant danger of Rebel snipers or sharpshooters, most of the work of digging approach trenches and rifle pits was done at night, and the days were spent relaxing or in the pits sniping. Many members of the 24th complained most about the constant shelling of the big guns. "Wish it would only be quiet for a little while," Shanklin wrote his wife, "my mind is becoming adled having lay under shot and shell for nearly a month."⁶¹

The day after the regiment arrived there was a brief truce so that both sides could bury their dead from the unsuccessful Union assault on the 22nd of May. Rigby reported,

Our dead was the most sicking sight I ever beheld, most of them had fallen in the charge of Friday (22nd) and lying exposed to the scorching rays of the sun is a sufficient description of their appearance; the stench was intolerable.⁶²

Lieutenant Lucas took advantage of the truce to get a better look at the Confederate fortress, but he was disappointed.

⁶⁰Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 121.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 122-23; Shanklin Letter, John to Nancy, May 26 and June 11, 1863.

⁶²Rigby Journal, May 25, 1863.

. . . the hill was not high enough, and I could not have a fair view of them. But as much as I can judge, I think it is what is called a "line at intervals." That is the kind of lines that is generally used to defend an important place. That is the kind of lines the Russians had at Sebastopol, during the Crimean war, in 1854. It is composed of three lines of works, called 'redans.' The redans are open on the inside that is on the side towards the defendant of the place. The works of the second line are built behind and half way between the works of the first line, and the works of the third line are inward line. So that if we take one work of the first line they could drive us out of it from two forts of the second line; and if we took a work of the second line, they could drive us out of it from two forts of the third or inward line. I think it would be next to an impossibility to take the place by storm. There is then what we call in French 'Chemin Couvert,' that is a kind of a ditch with the dirt thrown up towards us, and about wide enough for two men to walk abreast, and go from one work to another. They also have some rifle pits in front of their line of works. The object of our sharpshooters is to fire at all those of the enemy who raise their heads above their works, and especially the gunners.⁶³

The rifle pits and access trenches were dug closer and closer to the enemy's fortifications. General Hovey reported that the strain upon his men was extreme.⁶⁴ Private Shanklin said there was danger even from Union batteries because a bad shell often burst in the Federal trenches. Shanklin was more upset, however, with a Lieutenant Colonel in the 28th Iowa who was supposed to show Company E the way to some new pits. When they were shot at along the way, the officer had left the men and run back to camp saying that the company had been captured. Caught in the open as daylight approached, Shanklin and his company had to lay on the ground all day, not daring to raise their heads. As soon as evening came, Shanklin wrote:

I never suffered so for water as I did that day as quick as it got dark enough . . . I split out and come down to a little crick I dipt up some of it and went to drink and it was so full of tad poles that I had to straned it threw my teeth to drink

⁶³Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 176-79.

⁶⁴Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 241.

if that aynt tuff I dont know what is tuff and it was all caused by that shit as of an officer he outh to be dismist from the service he is to big a coward to be in command of a lot of men⁶⁵

Most of the regiment seemed to respect their officers despite experiences like Shanklin suffered. Private Rigby was especially impressed by General Osterhaus, nicknamed the "Flying Dutchman" by his men. He was so jovial and energetic that he actually caused General McClernand to laugh. When General McClernand was subsequently removed from command of the XIII Corps and replaced by Major General Edward Otho Cresap Ord, many members of the regiment were surprised and upset. Webb wrote that McClernand had started for Springfield, Illinois, and General Ord had taken over, much to the dissatisfaction of the division, but that nothing could be done about it. A few days later Webb reported that "the new general has got things aranged and things are doing fine." General Ord proved an able officer, and the men's early dissatisfaction soon died away.⁶⁶

To break up the monotony of the siege, the regiment's members engaged in a variety of activities while off duty. Private Webb went out with a foraging party and observed many of the farms lying idle. He wrote, "The niggers wont work and what few whites there is left are to lasy to do anything." Shanklin was able to forage blackberries, sweet corn, and plums. Sergeant Hoag busied himself building a sun shade similar to those he had constructed for cattle in Iowa and a spring bed made from cane limbs laid lengthwise on a frame. Rigby

⁶⁵Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, June 7, 1863.

⁶⁶Rigby Journal, June 11, 1863; Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 127; Warner, Generals in Blue, p. 349; Webb Record, June 19 and 23, 1863.

occupied part of his free hours remodeling his rifle, by varnishing the stock and polishing the barrel.⁶⁷

With the supply lines open to Haynes' Bluff the men received not only rations and mail, but the baggage they had left on the barges back in April at the start of the campaign. Rigby received his boxed goods in good order, but his knapsack and overcoat had been stolen. The loss to many of the regiment in clothing was replaced with an issue of new uniforms, of which Rigby thoroughly approved. Rumors also traveled the supply route from Haynes' Bluff. The report of an attack on a newly formed Negro regiment brought quick response from Private Webb, "had a fight a milegens bend and the niger regments whipt the rebles and took to hundred prisoners and this will do the rebs good i think." The rumor of General Johnston's army approaching from the east was always about, as well as the threatening rumor of Pemberton's forces trying to break out of Vicksburg.⁶⁸

The 24th Iowa moved their camp to a more protected location after one man was killed in his bed and two others wounded by stray Rebel bullets. The real killer among the troops remained disease, however, especially diarrhea. Shanklin wrote, "I have this diarea the worst cind part of the time nothing comes from me only blood and corruption." Some of the sick were transferred to hospitals in the

⁶⁷Webb Record, June 16, 1863; Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, June 7, 1863; Hoag Diary, May 31, 1863; Ely, War Sketches and Incidents, p. 113; Rigby Journal, June 20, 1863.

⁶⁸Rigby Journal, June 8, 1863; Webb Record, June 7 and 24, 1863.

North. Amasa Allen was one member of the 24th whose transfer came too late.⁶⁹ Private Allen wrote his wife July 3, 1863, his last letter:

My dear wife,

I am at Webster Hospital, Memphis, Tennessee, I am very sick. My disease is chronic diarrhea. I am bad; I am very doubtful of my own recovery. So dear wife prepare for the worst. This morning while chaplain W. C. Smith is writing this letter I do feel feeble. I have the cold sweat. Do take care of our dear children; and if I never see you more let us try to meet in Heaven the home of the good.

Do as you think best about coming; advise with your friends, and let them direct you. I suspect you can get some money from my mother.⁷⁰

Agnes did not get the money; she was told by Amasa's father, "Be instead submissive to the will of God who doth all things right." No money was available to make the trip, and Amasa, like many in the 24th Iowa, died alone in a hospital far from Iowa.⁷¹

Surprisingly the spirits of most of the men remained high throughout the siege. Shanklin felt he was doing a righteous thing when he was shooting at the Rebels, and if a furlough was ever granted, he threatened to hang one man in Iowa who was criticizing the company's captain. Payment of back wages helped boost morale on July 1. Second Lieutenant Lucas received \$731.00, sending home all but \$100.00.⁷²

July 4, 1863, brought on a wild celebration all along the line. At 8 o'clock in the morning General Pemberton formally surrendered

⁶⁹Hoag Diary, June 11, 1863; Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, May 26, 1863.

⁷⁰Allen Letters, Amasa to Agnes, July 3, 1863.

⁷¹Ibid., Orlando Allen to daughter Agnes, July 12, 1863.

⁷²Shanklin Letters, John to Nancy, July 7, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 182.

Vicksburg to General Grant. Cannons boomed all around, loaded for the first time with only powder. Bands played national airs, and all along the lines the opposing forces met and hugged each other like brothers.⁷³

The 24th Iowa's celebration was cut short, however, when they received orders to prepare with five days' rations to march at five the following morning. Hovey's division was being sent with most of the XIII Corps to join General Sherman's forces who were pursuing the forces under Confederate General Johnston.⁷⁴

Leaving one-third of the regiment sick in Vicksburg, the 24th marched toward Jackson, Mississippi, by way of Black River Bridge, Edwards Station, and Raymond. The regiment was allowed to pause briefly at Champion's Hill to examine the battle field and the graves of their dead. Approaching Jackson from the south, Hovey's division drove in Johnston's pickets and began siege operations similar to those at Vicksburg. Anticipating the move of Sherman's forces to encircle the city, Johnston evacuated Jackson the night of July 16-17.⁷⁵

Occupation of the town was dangerous because mines with trip wires had been left by the departing Confederates. After several of Sherman's soldiers had been wounded, including members of the 24th Iowa, the city was sacked and burned in revenge. Rigby reported that the stores were pillaged and that many of the officers and men were intoxicated. The Union troops also destroyed the railroads entering the city

⁷³Hoag Diary, July 4, 1863; Webb Record, July 4, 1863; Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 126; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 181.

⁷⁴Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, p. 602; Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 127.

⁷⁵Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), pp. 182-86.

while a few divisions were sent in pursuit of Johnston's army.⁷⁶

On July 21 the 24th returned to Vicksburg, arriving July 23 after traveling about fifty miles in less than two and one-half days. The forced march in the hot and sultry weather took its toll in sun-stroke victims, and Rigby reported that two-thirds of the regiment dropped out during the twenty mile march of July 22. Second Lieutenant Lucas blamed the forced march on "high officers" who had horses to ride and had never suffered marching with a gun and thirty or forty pounds of equipment. Rigby further complained that on arriving exhausted in Vicksburg, they had to lie around in the broiling hot sun long enough for Colonel Slack to get drunk, finally going to camp without orders.⁷⁷

The regiment encamped along the riverfront and settled down to recuperate from the exhausting march. Most of the sick who had been left at Vicksburg were recovered, and everyone was excited about the prospect of getting a furlough. Three members in each company were given a leave for thirty days, and those still ill were sent north to hospitals. Many of the men who were sick but did not wish to leave the regiment remained off the sick rolls and doctored themselves. Lucas, whose weight had dropped from 148 to 137 pounds, took two bottles of Hostetter's bitters, but the ensuing days of inactivity probably did more than anything else to return the regiment to a state of good health.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Rigby Journal, July 17 and 18, 1863

⁷⁷Ibid., July 22 and 23, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 187; Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 182.

⁷⁸Hoag Diary, July 26, 1863; Smith, Annals of Iowa (July, 1893), p. 182; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 188.

As a result of the campaign at Vicksburg, the 24th Iowa Infantry earned a place in the Union Army as a veteran fighting unit. The regiment paid a high price, with half of its number dead or discharged from wounds and disease. Tested as a supporting unit in the Battle of Port Gibson, the 24th Iowa led the attack in the Battle of Champion's Hill. These battles also pointed out that the weakness of the regiment was their colonel. Byam's resignation gave the regiment a trusted leader, Lieutenant Colonel Wilds, who led their successful expedition against Jackson. Perhaps more important than the regiment's successes on the battle field was the change of attitude of the privates in the ranks. Helena had produced talk of desertion and insubordination; the campaign produced pride in self, regiment and commanding general. The Vicksburg Campaign was the high point in the career of the 24th Iowa, although three other departments and commanders would be served.

Chapter 5

TRANSFERRED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF

August 2, 1862, found the 24th Iowa boarding the steamer Diana for a trip south once again. Now that the Vicksburg Campaign was over the XIII Corps was being transferred to the Department of the Gulf, commanded by Major General Nathaniel P. Banks. Many soldiers were envious of the 5 per cent of the regiment who had received thirty day furloughs home, but the beautiful southern mansions that lined the river bank soon lifted the spirits of the less fortunate. Disembarking at Natchez, the men declared that this was the nicest city that they had seen in the South. Situated high on a bluff behind the city, the men passed a pleasant week relaxing in the healthiest camp they had lived in since enlisting.¹

The regiment's campground was located near a government camp for nearly 2,000 dispossessed Negroes. Rigby found them in no way indigent; many blacks sought jobs carrying water, cooking, and washing for the regiment. Rigby did admit that there were drawbacks, however, because of certain unprincipled soldiers. "I have witnessed with pain the licentiousness of our soldiers more since coming to this place than ever before," recorded the Christian private. To enlighten the wayward,

¹Hoag Diary, July 26 and Aug. 2, 1863; Rigby Journal, Aug. 2, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 189; Webb Record, Aug. 2, 1863; Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, p. 325.

Sunday services were reinstated, despite temperatures of 102 degrees in the shade.²

The regiment's only duties were to guard against possible attack by one of the guerrilla bands in the area. While standing guard duty, the 24th was still able to sample some of the area's fruit. In Lucas' estimation one peach was worth at least a half dozen of those grown in Iowa. The duty was all too short, for on August 10 the regiment boarded the Desare bound for Carrollton, Louisiana.³

Between Natchez and Carrollton, the country had not been ravaged by war, and the farm boys marvelled at the lush crops of corn and sugar cane. Despite the use of quinine, the regiment had many men down with malaria again. Private Rigby, too ill to eat during most of the trip downriver, gladly purchased some fresh melons from one of the market women who greeted their boat. The regiment was quickly disappointed at the miserable location of its camp. They were finally settled on some higher ground below the town, but Rigby's mess still found it to be necessary to invest a dollar in some lumber to build bunks off the damp ground.⁴

Carrollton, located six miles above New Orleans, was a regular camp town according to Rigby. Men were constantly returning to camp intoxicated, and he wrote, "Huckster women are the prominent characters of this important burg and a most degraded class of being I never saw;

²Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 189; Rigby Journal, Aug. 3, 1863; Hoag Diary, Aug. 9, 1863.

³Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 189; Rigby Journal, Aug. 10, 1863.

⁴Webb Record, Aug. 11, 1863; Rigby Journal, Aug. 10, 11, 13, and 19, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 191.

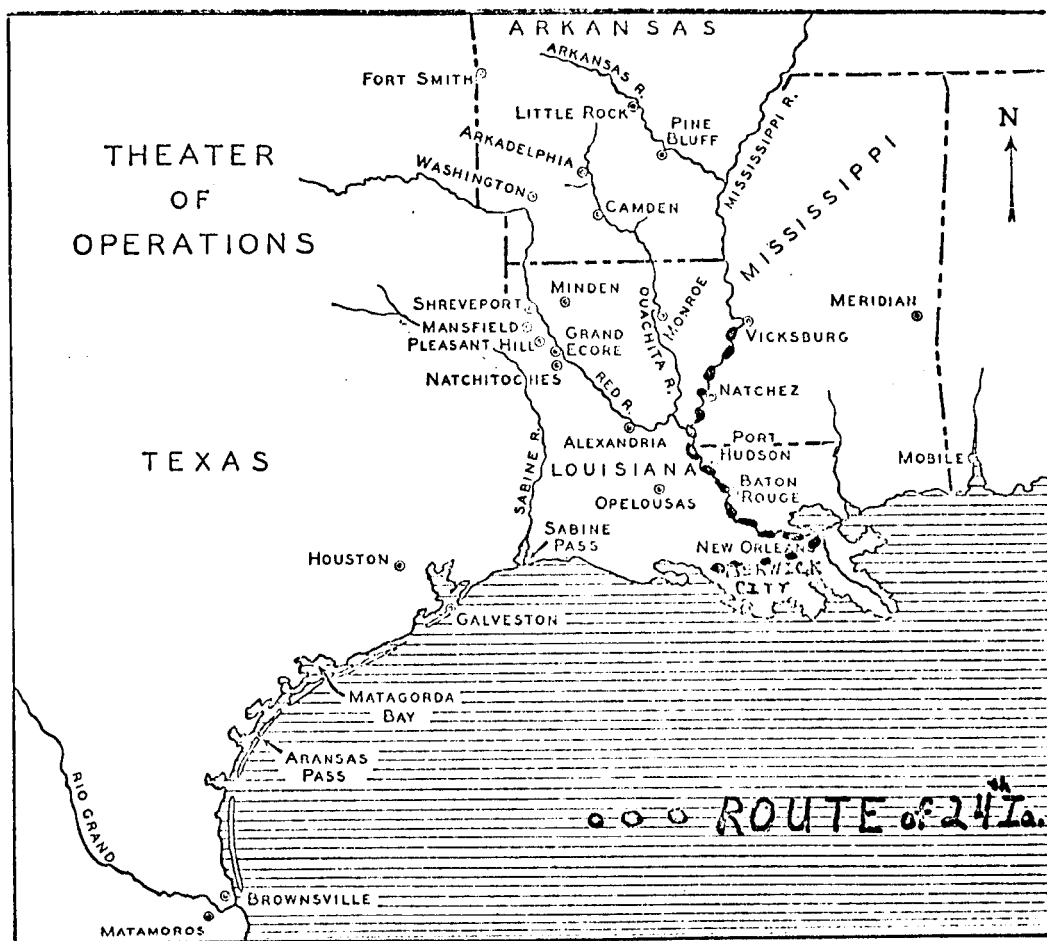


Figure 5.1. Department of the Gulf. Map adapted from Ludwell H. Johnson, Red River Campaign, Politics and Cotton in the Civil War (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1958), p. 38. Hereinafter referred to as Red River Campaign. The movement of the 24th Iowa is shown from August 2, 1863, to September 30, 1863.

chastity is an obsolete term with them." Lieutenant Lucas found that a few French families and a large number of Creoles, most of whom were able to speak French, lived in Carrollton. It seemed to rain constantly, and the inhabitants informed Lucas that there was often a yellow fever epidemic during the summer.⁵

Each company in turn was treated with a pass to see the sights of New Orleans. Like typical tourists the Iowans tried to do everything in a day. Most of the men took the train which only cost twenty cents for a round trip. After they passed down Canal Street, the first stop was usually in front of the bronze statue of Henry Clay. Next they visited Andrew Jackson's monument which reminded Lucas of Godefroid de Bouillion's statue in Brussels, Belgium. Rigby could but wonder at the disloyalty which had grown up around such a serene monument inscribed, "The Union must and shall be preserved." A short distance away was the French Market, described as a beehive of activity. Sellers of nearly every nationality were represented, holding up their merchandise to the crowd. There seemed to be everything to tempt the appetite, and it took extraordinary resolution to walk away without empty pockets.⁶

The beauty of the streets reminded Lucas of the time while serving in the Belgian army, when he had been stationed in Brussels. The only exception seemed to be the ominous sight of the "Auction Block." President Lincoln's proclamation about freeing the slaves in the South would be true, Lucas hoped, for all generations to come. The

⁵Rigby Journal, Aug. 19, 20, and 22, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), p. 191.

⁶Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), pp. 191-92; Rigby Journal, Aug. 24, 1863; Hoag Diary, Aug. 23, 1863.

tour was not complete without a visit to the cemetery three miles away, which most of the men rode to for five cents on streetcars that ran along Canal Street. Some of the beautiful vaults had been broken into by vandals, and human bones were scattered around. If time permitted, the sightseers traveled north of the city to view Lake Pontchartrain, but most, like Rigby, chose to visit a photo studio to get some pictures made to send home. Before departing on an evening train, the tourists visited the coffee house with its warm biscuits that helped, in Rigby's opinion, to "rejuvenate the inner man."⁷

On August 29 a grand review was held for Generals Banks and Washburn. As the troops marched in front to the reviewing stand, Rigby felt that General Banks' withering gaze seemed to catch sight of each man and caused even the most careless to take on a more soldierly appearance. Lieutenant Lucas recognized General Banks as an appearance-minded commander who liked his troops to be uniformly clothed. An army properly attired was a fine goal in Lucas' opinion prior to a campaign, but the Belgian knew from experience that long marches would find much of the new clothing thrown by the wayside.⁸

Another grand review was held on September 4 with the arrival of General Grant for a visit. The XIII Corps, veterans of the Vicksburg Campaign, were lined up beside the XIX Corps, formerly attached to the Army of the Potomac. Rigby wrote:

I could but contrast the difference between the reception given to Gen. Grant and that of Gen. Banks upon last Saturday. Gen. Grant

⁷Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), pp. 192-93; Rigby Journal, Aug. 24, 1863.

⁸Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), pp. 193, 195; Rigby Journal, Aug. 29, 1863.

was greeted by deafing cheers all along the line showing our eastern pimps the appreciation with which he is held by his 'gofers.'⁹

Grant's appearance caused Lucas to reflect on the general's success. The Belgian compared Grant to Napoleon Bonaparte. Although a great general with the confidence and good will of the troops he commanded in the campaign against Vicksburg, Lucas believed that Grant was not pompous or proud. In his ordnance uniform Grant looked more like a farmer riding about than a military man. Despite a rather grim appearance, Grant was very sociable with his men; he often went alone around camp encouraging privates as well as officers. Often remembering "Father Grant," the troops regretted his absence here in Louisiana. Unable to assess General Banks' fighting qualities as yet, Lucas felt that because of his civilian background they could not expect as much from him as from a West Pointer.¹⁰

The 24th engaged in almost daily drill while waiting the arrival of the remainder of the XIII Corps from Vicksburg. Private Webb wrote, ". . . the camp amusement is drilling and inspections and grand reviewing, i ges it is all jeneral banks thinks of." The sick were also examined, and the unfit were sent to the Marine Hospital in New Orleans. Some, like Rigby, refused to submit to an examination. They preferred to take their chances and stay with the regiment. By the middle of September most of the "furlough boys" had returned bringing welcome news from home and useful presents. The XIII Corps' 5th Division had also arrived from Vicksburg, and rumors abounded of an expedition, perhaps to Texas.¹¹

⁹Rigby Journal, Sept. 4, 1863.

¹⁰Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900), pp. 194-96.

¹¹Rigby Journal, Aug. 21, Sept. 4 and 12, 1863; Webb Record, Aug. 27, 1863; Hoag Diary, Sept. 3, 1863.

Before the 24th Iowa left Carrollton on September 14, the number of its division was changed from the 12th to the 3rd. The troops were transferred by ship to Algiers, Louisiana, and then taken by rail to Brashear City, Louisiana. All excess baggage and equipment were marked and stored in New Orleans. Lucas recalled that he carried only a rubber blanket, a woolen blanket, two shirts, two pairs of socks, and a towel. The new camp was along Atchafalaya Bayou, whose saltwater could be used only for cooking. Although Rigby took a saltwater bath, most of the regiment refrained because of the many alligators in the bayou. The swampy area was also infested with large mosquitoes which Rigby declared must be kin to the Devil or Jeff Davis, and probably the latter.¹²

The subsequent move across the bayou to Berwick City, Louisiana, did little to alleviate the mosquito menace because this camp was near a cypress swamp. General Ord had arrived to take command of the corps, and discipline was being enforced. The temperance regiment meted out swift justice to one member who twice returned to the regiment intoxicated. His court-martial sentence was three months' confinement at hard labor and forfeiture of his pay. A man from the 1st Missouri Battery in the 2nd Brigade was drummed out of service with half his head shaved for the crime of theft. Rigby organized nightly prayer meetings to help the wayward. He saw no hope, however, for the eastern troops.¹³

Major General William B. Franklin commanded the XIX Corps

¹²Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1900 and Jan., 1901), pp. 196, 217-18; Rigby Journal, Sept. 14, 1863.

¹³Rigby Journal, Sept. 23, 24, 27, 28, and 30, 1863; Hoag Diary, Sept. 24, 1863.

composed mainly of eastern regiments. Lieutenant Lucas said that they knew how to put on style, and he became friendly with several French and Belgians in the New York regiments. Rigby, as did most of the 24th, had little use for the easterners, especially after some of them raided and cleaned out all the sutlers in the vicinity. Confinement orders were applied to both corps as a result, and Private Rigby was bitter. Private Webb added, "the boys has there own fun with the New Yorkers they hate our boys as they hate the devile."¹⁴

A winter expedition through the rich Teche River basin of western Louisiana proved to be an unproductive, sustained exercise. Marches averaged fifteen miles per day through the little Louisiana towns of Franklin, New Iberia, Vermillion, and Grand Couteau. The advance was finally stopped at Opelousas on October 23. The movement north had been rather uneventful with Major General Richard Taylor's Confederate Army withdrawing each time the Federal troops approached. Passing many fine plantations the men were impressed with the fields of cotton, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, and peanuts. Every plantation had a sugar mill with a number of hogsheads full of sugar. Private Webb wrote, "the country here is the nicest i ever saw in the south and nice plantations the white settlers here are the creale brede and look more like indians than white folks."¹⁵

¹⁴Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, pp. 325-28; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 218, 228, and 231; Rigby Journal, Sept. 19, 1863; Webb Record, Dec. 23, 1863. Hicken states that the shiny, well-drilled eastern troops could hardly believe that their western counterparts from Illinois, Iowa, and Michigan were also soldiers. The westerners soon proved themselves by outmarching and outbrawling the eastern dandies.

¹⁵Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, pp. 325-26; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 219-20; Webb Record, Oct. 11, 1863.

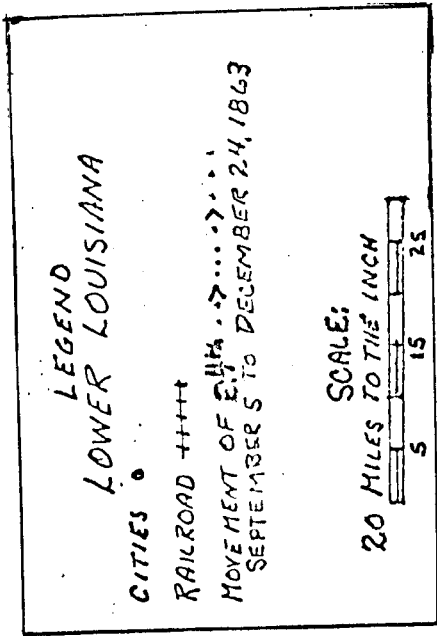
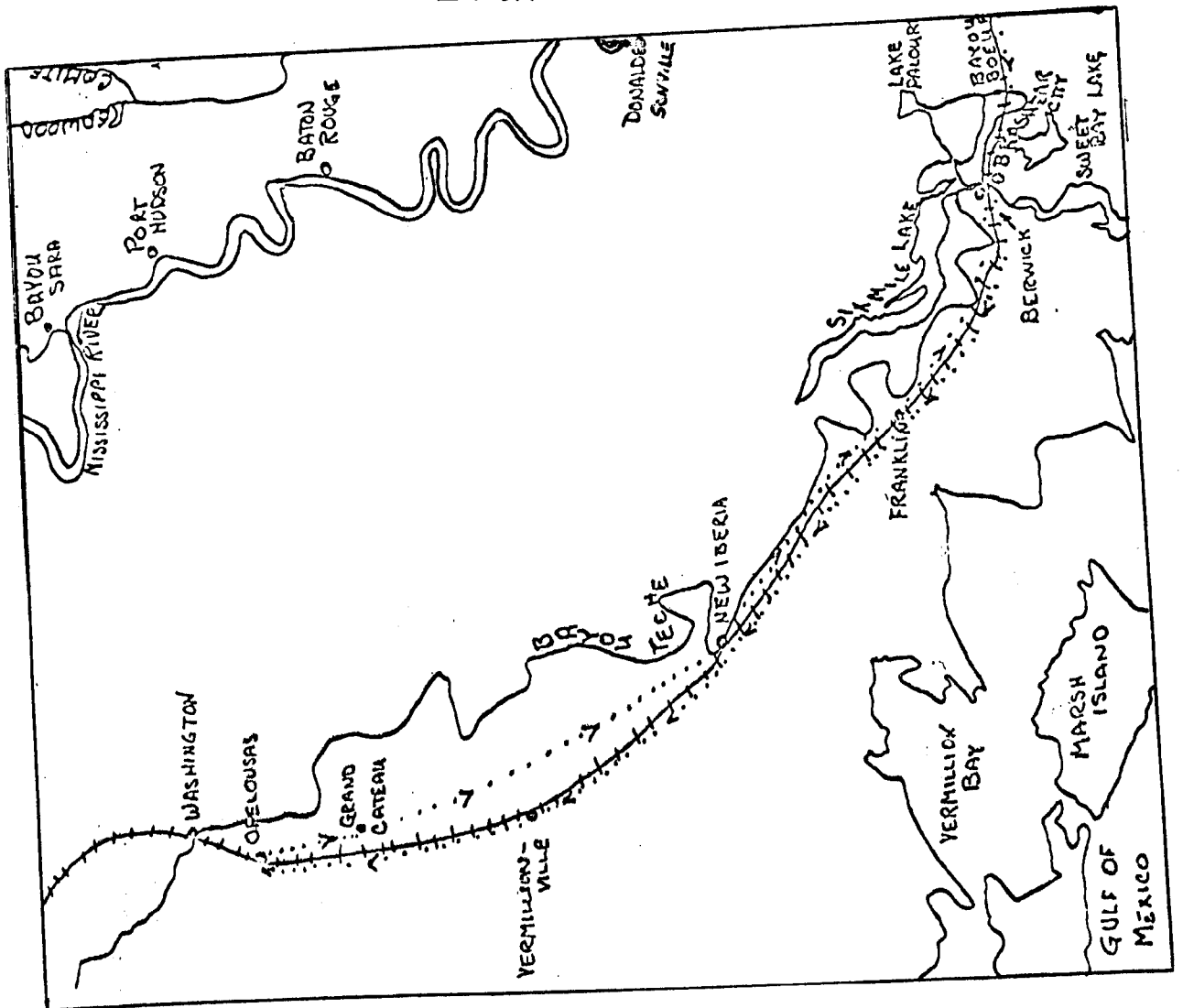


Figure 5.2. Teche Campaign. Map adapted from Daniel Richard Ryan, "A Hancock County Soldier's Experiences in the Civil War: The Diaries of Elisha Bentley Hamilton" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Western Illinois University, 1970), p. 74.



Foraging was excellent with barns and fences appropriated at each campsite too. Guards were often put around camp to arrest stragglers and to prevent destruction of property, but the guards generally either looked the other way or fined the culprit part of his booty. According to Rigby, the "Eastern Dignitaries" would find it difficult work to confine western troops. Even Major Wright, upon approaching a barn at camp time, told the 24th to break ranks and search for wood. Rigby and his two cousins had by this time secured a pony to carry their knapsacks as they marched along in style. Sergeant Hoag reported that foraging and gambling were the orders of the day.¹⁶

Samuel S. Daniels, the editor of the Tipton Advertiser, while visiting the 24th Iowa during the Teche campaign, observed:

We have besides the usual rations, fresh beef, pork, mutton, chickens, geese, ducks, possum, honey, and sweet potatoes. Beef and sweet potatoes are in almost inexhaustible quantities and of the very best quality. Up to and on the day of our arrival the men were allowed to forage, every man for himself, and the quantities of chickens and the like that were brought in were astonishing . . . As we entered New Iberia the Major asked the band to give the citizens a little Yankee music, and they gave it, "John Brown's" included . . . On rising on the morning of the 11th, which was Sunday, we found that a large barn which we had noticed the night before had entirely disappeared, not a shingle or a stick was to be seen all had gone to shelter or warm the army; the fences too had all disappeared. It is a fact that cypress rails make a good fire. No one who has not seen it, can conceive how quick 'the boys' will fix up something comfortable for a shelter out of the roughest material.¹⁷

Daniels was a member of a commission sent to gather the vote of the 24th Iowa. After reaching Vermillion and setting up camp, the regiment took time to hold a political meeting, and several speeches were

¹⁶Rigby Journal, Oct. 4, 10, 11, and 15, 1863; Hoag Diary, Oct. 11, 1863.

¹⁷The Tipton Advertiser, Nov. 12, 1863, p. 2.

made, all of which favored the Union ticket and the use of the black man in any way that would help the cause of the North. Daniels supposed that it was the first abolition political meeting ever held in that part of Louisiana. On October 13 at 8 o'clock A. M. the regiment was drawn up in line, and the members elected three men to act as judges of the election. The judges then selected two to act as clerks. The polls remained open from 9 until 3 o'clock; and the results were an overwhelming victory for the Union ticket, not only in the 24th but in all of the Iowa regiments in the XIII Corps.¹⁸ Lieutenant Lucas' tally for governor (see Table 4) clearly showed the soldier's sentiments.

Table 4
Election Results, XIII Corps,
Iowa Regiments

Regiment	Union Candidate, Col. William M. Stone	Democratic Gen. Tuttle
21st Iowa	166	37
22nd Iowa	257	36
23rd Iowa	101	37
24th Iowa	271	10
28th Iowa	264	67

Source: Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), p. 221.

The members of the 24th were proud that they gave the most votes for the Union ticket in proportion to the number of votes cast. Rigby was pleased that his company voted the straight Union ticket and that all the officers of the 24th voted a loyal ticket. After visiting the

¹⁸Ibid.

56th Ohio, where a large number of officers voted for Vallandigham, the "Copperhead" candidate, Rigby felt that President Lincoln should dismiss every commissioned officer who cast a vote for such a traitor and that he should send them beyond the Union lines. Webb wrote with strong feeling, "some men will cut there own throats any time for the party name and that shows the trators in our ranks."¹⁹

On October 23, Opelousas, Louisiana, was occupied only a few hours after the Rebel army withdrew. The army remained here until November 1 when the soldiers began marching back along the same route over which they had advanced.²⁰ The foraging continued and Rigby wrote:

A rebel calf refusing to take the oath of allegiance was duly killed without further trial. Our ration of meat thereby is considerably augmented.

Enjoyed a nocturnal ramble, but had the misfortune of sticking fast to a gate which the owner found missing in the morning. We believe however that our misfortune may be turned into a blessing. Rebel gates make excellent bunks so says experience.²¹

On the return march disaster struck one of the foraging parties of the 24th. Captain Gue of Company C had been ordered out with a squad of twenty men and a wagon to gather sweet potatoes. Having gone out about four miles from the protection of the camp, Captain Gue and his squad, while digging sweet potatoes, were approached by a party of thirty horsemen dressed in blue uniforms. One of the horsemen rode toward Gue and his men, and the captain, thinking the rider was part of the Union cavalry, rode forward also. When Captain Gue was within

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 220-21; Rigby Journal, Oct. 14, 1863; Webb Record, Oct. 14, 1863.

²⁰Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), p. 225.

²¹Rigby Journal, Nov. 2 and 3, 1863.

thirty yards of the blue-clad rider, the man raised his carbine and shot Captain Gue in the heart, killing him instantly. The squad, hurrying toward Gue, fired a few ineffective shots, but the assassin took Gue's sword and revolver and made good his escape.²²

The harassment by Rebel guerrilla bands plagued the marchers throughout their return to Berwick City. On November 17 the 24th fell victim again when five members of Company F were captured while foraging for wood. The 24th fared better than General Burbridge's brigade which was attacked on November 6 while acting as rear guard to the column. The brigade lost about 250 men before reinforcements could arrive.²³

Despite the enemy harassment the return march took place in leisurely fashion. Eleven days were spent in the town of Vermillionville, and the army camped a month at New Iberia. Lieutenant Lucas was impressed with the number of Catholics living in the New Iberia area. He enjoyed the church services, which were in French, and he was well received in the homes of several French families. While the men were very reserved, the ladies, especially the young ones, spoke openly that in their opinion it did not look right for a foreigner to be in the Union army. But by his charm and good arguments the Lieutenant believed that he soon convinced them of their error and made them pro-Union for the time being at least. Rigby preferred the services at the one protestant church in the town, which reminded him of home except that the church was very much behind the times--as were all other southern institutions in his

²²Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan, 1901), p. 222.

²³Ibid., pp. 221-24; Hoag Diary, Nov. 17, 1863.

opinion.²⁴

On Thanksgiving Day the regiment formed with its division in a hollow square around a platform whereupon they were treated to music by the 11th and 34th Indiana bands and some vocal music which was "not very praise worthy." Then Chaplain John Simmons of the 28th Iowa gave a discourse from the 43rd Psalm. His sermon was followed by speeches from several of the officers. At noon the assembly broke up to enjoy their Thanksgiving dinners of "inhabited hardtack and rotten sowbelly."²⁵

On December 6, Lieutenant Colonel Wilds, Captain Casebeer, and one noncommissioned officer or private from each company of the 24th left camp for Iowa to raise recruits for the regiment. On December 19, the regiment left New Iberia for Berwick City. The foraging continued, but sometimes it got out of hand. Companies B and G were ordered out to quell a riot in the 1st Brigade where the guards had been overpowered, and lumber was being carted away. General McGinnis arrived and ordered the companies to load their weapons and drive the looters back at bayonet point; whereupon, after several brickbats had been thrown, the mob dispersed.²⁶ The 1st Brigade caused problems all the way back to New Orleans. Private Webb wrote, "evra seller ship is shut up for the boys are out of money and they will have what they want they are cleaning out the orange peddler now."²⁷

²⁴Rigby Journal, Nov. 5, 16, 22, and Dec. 19, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), p. 226.

²⁵Rigby Journal, Nov. 26, 1863.

²⁶Ibid., Dec. 7, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 226-27.

²⁷Webb Record, Dec. 24, 1863.

Throughout most of the campaign the troops had been well supplied with rations, but this expedition seemed to most a waste of time and money. A great deal of cotton and sugar had been confiscated, but the only form of contact with the enemy had been in harassment and this mostly on the return march. Arriving at New Algiers, Louisiana, on December 25, the regiment received a Christmas present of two months' pay. Lieutenant Lucas spent \$30 on a dress coat, an expensive purchase but necessary since he was now in command of Company D because Captain Casebeer was on recruiting service in Iowa. Lucas normally wore a \$10 blouse when on campaign, but with the eastern troops putting on such style, he felt the need to be better outfitted. Lucas also spent \$2.50 for a hat, \$4.00 for a vest, \$2.55 on pants, and \$6.00 on new shoulder straps. Miscellaneous items including drawers, collars, and handkerchiefs totalled \$4.95. Lucas felt the prices were very high but that cheaper things were markedly inferior in quality. Some of the regiment went to town to celebrate the holidays and came back inebriated. Rigby was aghast that the best regiment had to be a leader in such revelry and infamous proceedings.²⁸

On December 27, the five members of Company F who had been captured while out foraging were returned as paroled prisoners. They reported that their food while captives had consisted of one sweet potato and a small piece of beef per day. The former prisoners also reported that a dollar greenback was worth five Confederates, and they sold all their buttons for corn meal at the rate of one button per pint

²⁸Rigby Journal, Dec. 25 and 26, 1863; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), p. 228.

of meal.²⁹

The troops were given a holiday from Christmas until the New Year. Guards were sometimes posted, but passes were easily forged. Webb reported, "the boys go where they please and role call is plaid out at present this is holadas and the boys will have there fun." Rigby, always fighting his guerrilla war against Christian backsliders, rebuked several for attending the circus.³⁰

The campground soon became a quagmire of mud with the inclement weather, and some of the troops were allowed to occupy some abandoned houses nearby. Lucas stated that new tents had arrived, but the weather was so bad that few had bothered to put them up. Promotions were coming through, and several sergeants in Company D had sought and received commissions as lieutenants in the 13th Regiment U. S. Corps d'Afriques.³¹

Major Ed Wright reported:

In camp at Algiers, La. weather very wet, the mud and water rendering the camp almost impassable to man or beast. Frequently the water after a heavy rain would rise several inches above the floors of the tents. Remained in this condition until the 14th when General McGinnis procured two warehouses on the bank of the River, immediately below town, and ordered me to move the Regiment in them. These warehouses were large and had fine piers in front for recreation.³²

Conditions were much improved since the troops not only had dry quarters, but also were allowed to hold dances almost nightly on the fifty-foot

²⁹Rigby Journal, Dec. 28, 1863.

³⁰Ibid., Dec. 29, 1863; Webb Record, Dec. 24-31, 1863.

³¹Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 229-30.

³²Iowa State Department of History and Archives Library, Des Moines, Iowa, 24th Infantry Historical Memoranda for 1864, Recorded by Major Ed Wright, Jan., 1864. Hereinafter referred to as Wright Memoranda.

pier. The respite was short-lived, however, because the division was assigned to the "District of the Defenses of New Orleans" and ordered on the 21st to report to Madisonville, Louisiana, a small town north of New Orleans on the far side of Lake Pontchartrain.³³

The regiment remained at Madisonville until February 26, building fortifications. The camp was comfortable, surrounded by a pine forest, and with a break in the weather the troops seemed to recover their health. Private Rigby was much encouraged by the large numbers who were attending his prayer meetings, but it upset him that the government had begun to issue whiskey as part of the rations. Sergeant Hoag admitted that some of the boys occasionally got intoxicated, but most enjoyed such activities as playing checkers, cards, chess, baseball, dancing, or reading novels.³⁴

Leaving a few eastern regiments to guard the newly constructed fort, the division was ordered back to New Orleans and went in to camp at Algiers. On March 3, the troops were reviewed by Major General McClernand, who made a speech in which he still contended that if the XIII Corps had been supported in the assault on Vicksburg, they would not have had to endure the siege. Lucas doubted the general's statement and felt that even if the statement was true, the attack would have cost too many lives. Transferred to Berwick Bay on the 6th, the regiment prepared for a forthcoming campaign by sending all excess camp and garrison

³³Ibid.; Webb Record, Jan. 15, 1864.

³⁴Wright Memoranda, Feb., 1864; Hoag Diary, Oct. 2 and Nov. 12, 1863, and Jan. 19, 30, and Feb. 6, 1864; Rigby Journal, Feb. 4, 1864; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), p. 231.

equipment back to New Orleans.³⁵

The 24th Iowa was about to become part of General Banks' ill-fated "Red River Campaign." The concept of gaining control of the cotton-rich Red River Valley dated back to the early days of the war. Unfortunately the attempt to make the idea a reality was beginning at the wrong time chronologically. In the beginning of 1864 the southern armies were on the defensive everywhere. Union victories at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga had driven the Confederacy close to capitulation. The death blow to the Confederacy would be struck east of the Mississippi River now that Vicksburg and Port Hudson had fallen. If the campaign were successful, the accomplishments would protect Federal control of the Mississippi, open a gateway for an invasion into Texas, and strengthen the 10 per cent governments that had been set up by the Union Army in Louisiana and Arkansas. Besides the political considerations, there was the ever-present economic one of cotton confiscation. The Red River Valley was as yet an untapped cotton resource, and the Federal appetite for cotton seemed unquenchable. Perhaps justified politically and economically, it was the wrong move militarily, especially when the proposed invasion of Mobile was eventually forgone for the unsuccessful Red River venture.³⁶

The main military objective of the Red River Campaign was to occupy Shreveport, the temporary capital of Confederate Louisiana, and a big supply depot of the trans-Mississippi Confederacy. In the process

³⁵Wright Memoranda, Feb., 1864; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), p. 231.

³⁶Bruce Catton, Grant Takes Command (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), pp. 172-73; Johnson, Red River Campaign, pp. 80-81; Catton, Never Call Retreat, pp. 336-37.

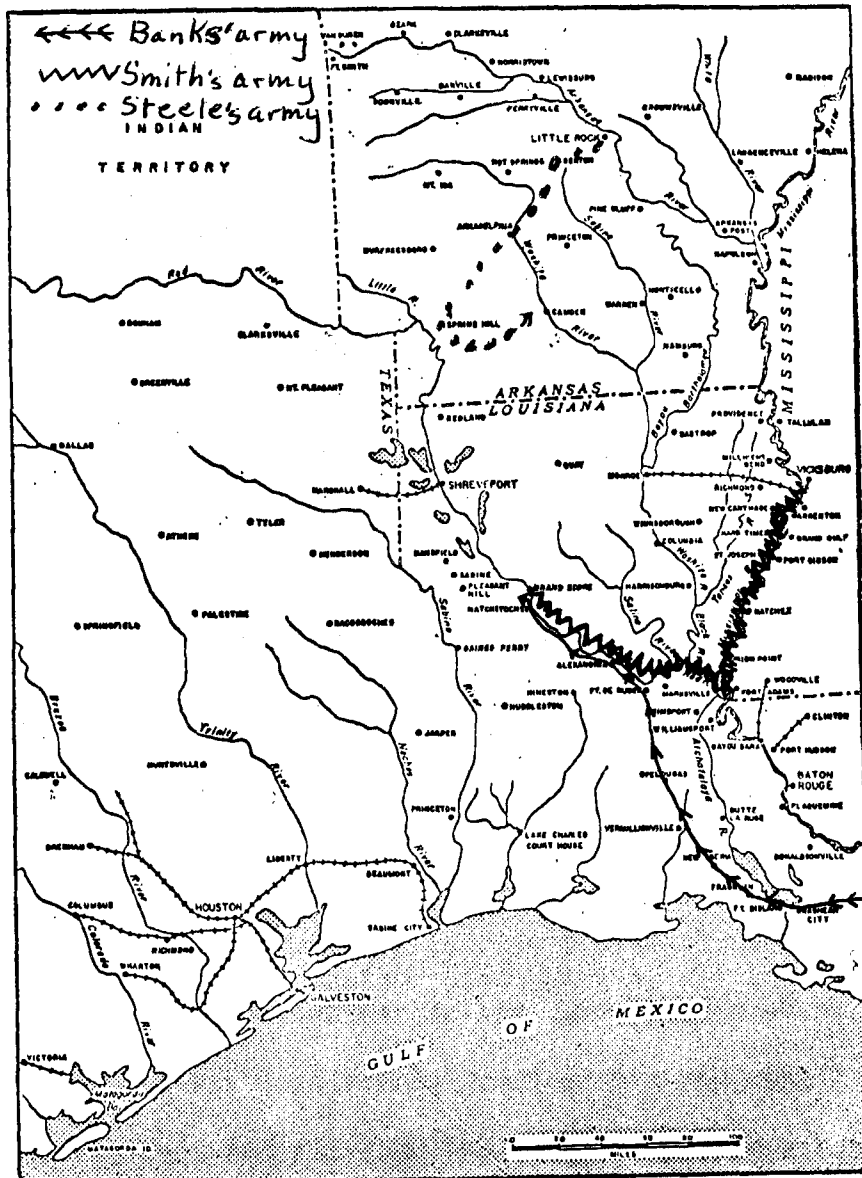


Figure 5.3. Red River Campaign, Early Troop Movements. Map adapted from Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, p. 969.

Rebels would be driven away from the Red River. Major General Frederick Steele was to lead 15,000 men south from Arkansas. General Sherman would supply 10,000 men under Major General A. J. Smith, and Admiral Porter would convey these troops up the Red River with a dozen gunboats. General Banks would bring 20,000 of his own troops from New Orleans on an over-land march up the Teche River Valley. All the forces were to converge at Alexandria, Louisiana, to make the combined attack on Shreveport.³⁷

Major Wright was commanding the 24th while Lieutenant Colonel Wilds was recruiting for the regiment in Iowa. The Major wrote:

Left Berwick Bay on the morning of the 13th for Shreveport, La. on what is generally known as Banks Red River Expedition. Col. Wm. H. Raynor Comdg. Brigade, General Cameron Comdg. 3d Division, and General Rausom Comdg Detachment 13th A. C. consisting of the 3d and 4th Divisions. Arrived at Franklin on the evening of 14th, rested one day, drew some Clothing and ammunition. Left on the morning of the 16th. Arrived at Washington, La. on the evening of the 20th, here we came up with the 19th Corps under command of Maj. General Franklin. Rested the 21st Left on the morning of the 22^d. Arrived at Alexandria La. on the 26th. Went into Camp about two miles above town on the banks of Rapides Bayou, rested 27th. Commenced the march again taking the advance on the morning of the 28th. Had to build a bridge which was done on the 30th. On the 31st resumed the march and arrived at Natchitockes La. at noon on the 1st day of April. Having traveled during the month by Rail Road 100 miles and marched 290 miles. The weather had been fine all the time. Roads good and everything passed off to the satisfaction of everyone.³⁸

Major Wright was justifiably proud of his regiment's marching ability. The regiment had finished the long tramp with a rapid twenty-three mile jaunt in six hours, when it was falsely reported that the cavalry was hard pressed and needed reinforcements. Most of the country from Berwick City to Opelousas afforded poor foraging, but from Opelousas to Alexandria the chickens, geese, and turkeys began to suffer, although

³⁷Catton, Grant Takes Command, pp. 172-73; Johnson, Red River Campaign, pp. 80-81; Catton, Never Call Retreat, pp. 336-37.

³⁸Wright Memoranda, March, 1864.

the rapid pace left little time for extensive jayhawking. The western troops in the XIII Corps also boasted that the eastern troops of the XIX Corps who were in the lead could not stay ahead of them. Lieutenant Lucas reported that the only opposition to the advance was scattered by Brigadier General Albert L. Lee's Cavalry which was well in advance of the infantry.

Sergeant Hoag was upset at the price of tobacco which cost five cents a chew, and Private Rigby's major complaint, aside from one about a person who set a fire too close to his tent and burned up its contents, was the excessive use of whiskey in the 28th Iowa. The only misfortune to befall the 24th was the capture and execution of a member of Company F by a band of rebel guerrillas near Natchitoches, Louisiana. The plantation where the killing occurred was razed by the regiment in retaliation.³⁹

On April 6, the XIII Corps took the lead and began marching once again for Shreveport. Reaching Pleasant Hill on the 7th, the 24th Iowa's brigade was immediately ordered forward to support the cavalry, but the enemy had retired by the time the brigade arrived. The following morning companies A, D, I, C, and H were assigned to guard the division's baggage train while the other five companies followed the advance of the 4th Division. Fighting was hard in the front all morning, but the enemy appeared to be driven by the cavalry as usual. At St. Patrick's Bayou the 3rd Division was ordered into camp about noon. The 24th remained in camp until about 2 o'clock. The XIX Corps had come up and also had gone into camp. The men believed a grand attack would be made the next

³⁹Ibid.; Hoag Diary, April 2 and 3, 1864; Rigby Journal, April 3, 1864; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 235-37.

morning, but at 2 o'clock the 3rd Division was ordered forward, and the 24th took part in the Battle of Sabine Cross Roads.⁴⁰

Two critical errors in the advance of Banks' army brought about a Union disaster at Sabine Cross Roads. Instead of following a river road near Porter's gunboats, Banks, unaware of this route, marched his army inland away from the Red River. Without the river transports the army was forced to carry all baggage in slow cumbersome wagon trains. The road narrowed to a trail through dense pine thickets, and a brisk shower April 7 turned the roadway into a mud wallow. The advance corps was strung out for more than twenty miles.⁴¹

The second Union mistake was Banks' army's order of march. In country where cavalry could no longer maneuver effectively, Lee's cavalry took the lead. General Lee's request to place the cavalry's baggage train with that of the infantry was denied, causing the cavalry advance to be separated from the infantry support by a slow-moving wagon train which would act as a barrier--either to rushing forward reinforcements or allowing an orderly retreat. Both General Banks and General Franklin, who commanded the XIII and XIX Corps, failed to realize either that the enemy was waiting in strong force, or that a major battle was taking shape until well into the afternoon.⁴²

General Lee's pleading for reinforcements finally prompted Franklin to commit the XIII Corps' 3rd and 4th Divisions, but the XIX Corps was held in reserve until it was too late to avert the disaster.

⁴⁰Wright Memoranda, April, 1864.

⁴¹Johnson, Red River Campaign, pp. 118, 124-25, 128, 143-44.

⁴²Ibid.

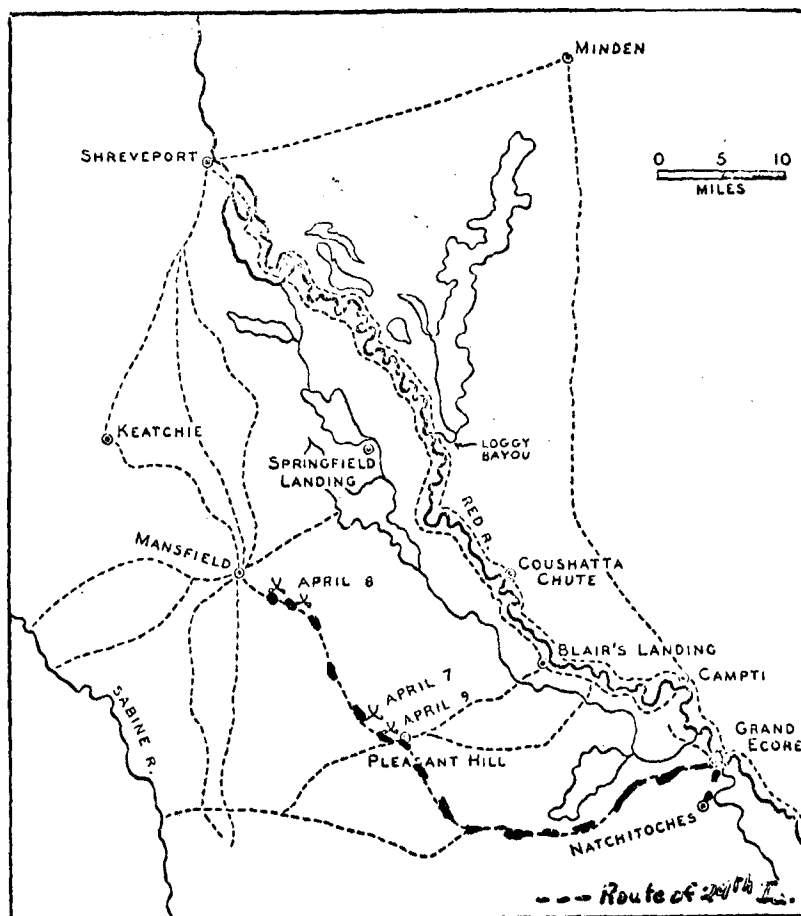


Figure 5.4. Red River Campaign, Banks' Advance on Shreveport. Map adapted from Johnson, Red River Campaign, p. 114.

The engagement took place in a clearing 800 yards across and 1,200 yards from left to right. Confederate General Taylor had massed approximately 8,800 men on the far side of the clearing to block further progress by the Union advance. The Federals were able to bring only 4,800 men into action, and they were virtually overwhelmed by the Confederate attack. Only the approach of darkness and a desperate stand by the 1st Division of the XIX Corps under Brigadier General William H. Emory prevented a total rout of Banks' army.⁴³

The role of the 24th Iowa as part of the 3rd Division of the XIII Corps came late in the conflict. Major Wright recorded:

About 11 o'clock the Cavalry train came up and passed us. The 4th Division moving out to support the cavalry. About this time General Banks came up and remarked that he would go to the front and see how things looked. Soon after this heavy firing commenced in front and continued without interruption for several hours. About 2 o'clock P. M. the 3d Division was ordered out and moved at double quick most of the way for four miles. Where arriving at the head of the train the first Brigade was formed in line of Battle on the right of the road leading from Pleasant Hill to Mansfield and the 2d Brigade in the left. The 24th about 130 strong (Cos. A. D. I. C. and H having been detailed as train guard and left in the rear under command of Captain Martin.) were ordered to form in the rear as a reserve to 2d Brigade. The lines being formed the advance was ordered. The lines moved forward near a fourth of a mile when coming to the edge of the field beyond the timber a halt was ordered and the line immediately engaged the enemy. The 24th about three hundred paces in the rear were ordered to lie down while in this position my command received a severe raking artillery fire from the enemys guns posted in front of the right of the Brigade. Having remained in this position about half an hour during which time the front line was firing rapidly. I was ordered to move my command to the front which I did by a left oblique movement and came in on the left of the Brigade, and took position in a ravine at the edge of the timber. From the position there occupied I could see with my field glass at least eight thousand of the enemy forming in the distance but not within range of our muskets. The enemy's Skirmishers had advanced to the edge of the hill in our front and were protected by a battery immediately on their left. which had taken position behind some large buildings from which

⁴³Ibid., pp. 127, 133-39, 145.

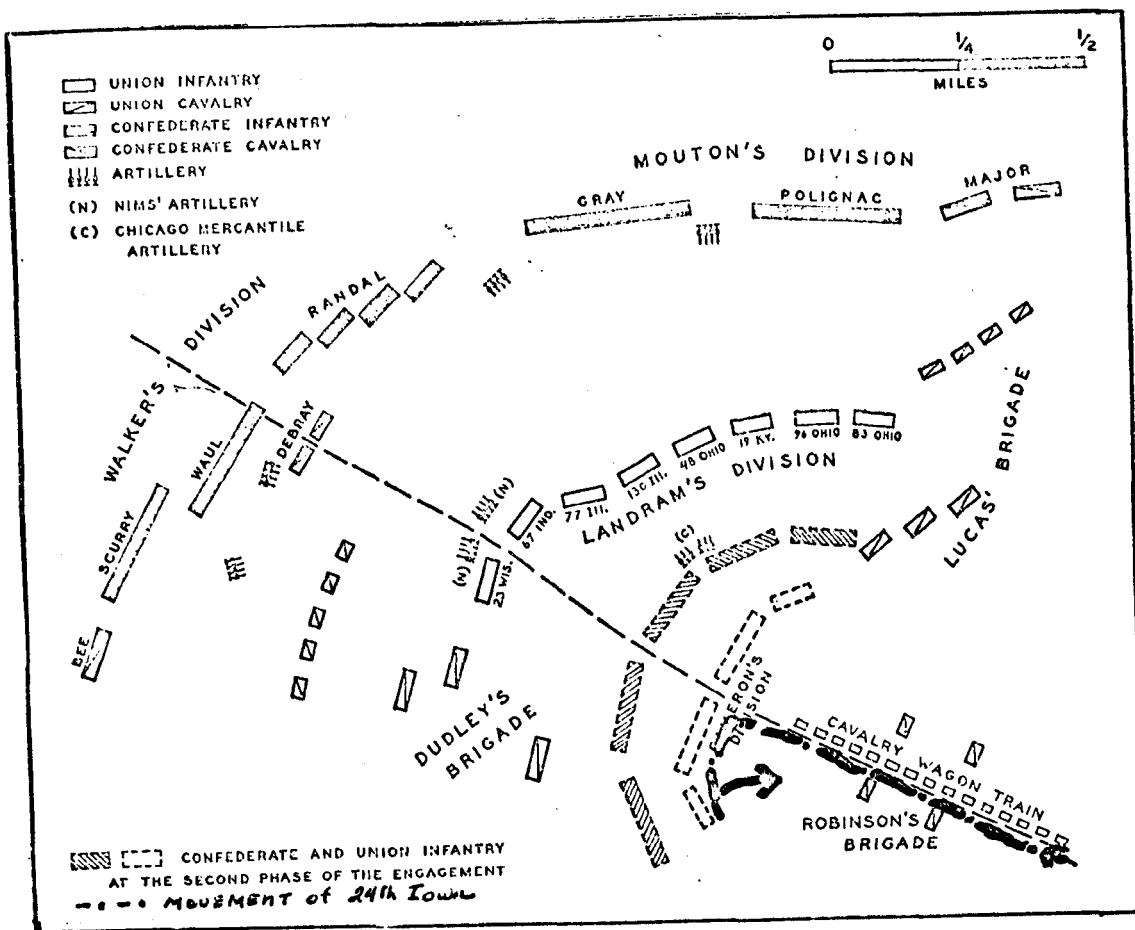


Figure 5.5. Battle of Sabine Crossroads. Map adapted from Johnson, Red River Campaign, p. 130.

place it was impossible for our weak line to dislodge it. The fourth Division I could not learn anything of. The only force to oppose these heavy columns of the enemy was the 3d Division about twelve hundred strong and some straggling cavalry. This position was held for near an hour when the enemy advancing in heavy force at least ten to one and most of the command being out of Ammunition. We were overwhelmed by numbers and compelled to retire from the field. This however was no easy task as the enemy's cavalry was already far in our rear, both on the right and left, and we were assailed on all points. I ordered my command to confine their movements to the thick brush as much as possible and by keeping in the woods between the road and an open field on our left, which was occupied by the enemy's cavalry. I succeeded in bring the most of the command off the field, and forming in the rear of the 19" A. C. about three miles from the battle field. After which I procured ammunition for my men and joined in with the 161 N. Y. Vols. and remained until after dark. When the fight being over I reported with my command to Gen. Cameron, and marched back to Pleasant Hill. Arrived there at sunrise on the morning of the 9" casualties during the day were 34 . . . I cannot close this report without making some comment about the manner in which this battle was managed. It was understood when the army arrived at St. Patrick's Bayou, that we had found the enemy in force, and why we should have been sent forward in detachments, only to be demolished by superior numbers is a mystery to me. First the Cavalry moved up and was repulsed. Next the 4" Division is moved forward and shared the same fate. Then the 3d Division is moved forward in double quick for five miles along a road blocked up by trains, only to come in contact with an overwhelming force, before which it was compelled to retire. Who is responsible? I leave the question for the Historian to answer, believing it will be answered correctly.⁴⁴

Private Rigby recorded his experience during the battle:

My adventures were not very remarkable, but I have a distinct idea of butternut coats, commands to halt and bullets coming uncomfortably near my person. At the commencement of the fight I had taken my position behind a large pine tree several yards in advance of the timber where I had been firing at leisure. When we first saw the approach of the enemy many of us were deceived, at first, by the approach of so many blue uniforms, but the sight of

⁴⁴Wright Memoranda, Major Ed Wright to Adj. Gen. N. B. Baker, April 22, 1864. Wright's official report in the Official Records is basically the same as the one sent to General Baker. In the Official Records report Wright claimed his loss was 1 surgeon and 29 enlisted men. On the morning of April 9 Wright claimed his command numbered 362 enlisted men, 296 of whom were armed and equipped, 23 sick, 13 on extra duty, and 30 without arms. This did not include Company F which had not joined the regiment on the battle field but had returned to its duties as provost guard at division headquarters.

stars and bars undeceived us. As they crossed the fence I discharged my piece and commenced loading to give them another shot from my good position before retreating. But a deafing yell and the whizzing of bullets taught me the importance of making immediate use of my trotters if I did not wish to be taken prisoner. But having no relish for testing the hospitality of Jeff Davis & Co. I put them to good use. By taking a zig zag course from tree to tree avoided being made a personal target and was enabled to load & fire. As I passed our hospital I saw Dr. Witherwax standing still muttering to himself, 'Can it be possible that the 3rd Division is retreating!' The rebs were then in short range and doubtless the old man fell into their hands. Sometimes the rebs were ahead of me on the road which nearly cut off my retreat. I avoided the road as much as possible. Stopped several times to render aid to exhausted men. Was pretty well used up when the 19th A. C. came up. Being in an eligible position for observation I stood still to witness the gallant advance of our brave 'Down Easterns.' Their ranks were fearfully thinned but with few exceptions they advanced steadily. The Col. of the Zouaves fell the first fire which created a stampede of a portion of the reg't but they soon rallied and did good execution . . . Where was the 24th? Where was Co. B. I at length came across Issac Blatner who said that the Major was endeavoring to form the regt. some place he did not know where. We started out in search and soon found the Major, Capt. Smith & Rigby and forty or fifty men from all the regiments of the brigade. Five of our company were there. We formed in line and joined the 161st N. Y. Learning that Gen. Cameron was reforming the Div. back where we camped at noon, we started back. Found several squads of our regt. along the road. Had gone a mile or so, when we came up with the broken fragments of our Division. Gen. Rausons was wounded during the fight, hence the command of the Corps devolved upon Gen. Cameron. Col. Raymon took command of our Div. and Maj. Wright our Brigade. Forty men were all that were left of the left wing of our Regt. Fifteen men were all that remained of the forty which went in the fight from our company. Being partially reorganized we rec'd orders to guard the Wagon train which had all ready begun the moving to the rear. Each one had the story of their adventure and hairs breadth escapes which would fill a volume of interest . . . Our Army Corps marched all night and by nine o'clock next morning we marched into Pleasant Hill under different circumstances from the night of the 7th when, so bouyant, so confident and vigorous; now disheartened and worn down.⁴⁵

Under cover of darkness the defeated Union Army withdrew to Pleasant Hill to make a determined stand. General A. J. Smith had arrived with his parts of the XVI and XVII Corps, and on April 9 they repulsed Taylor's Confederates, supported by the XIX Corps. From the

⁴⁵Rigby Journal, April 9 and 10, 1864.

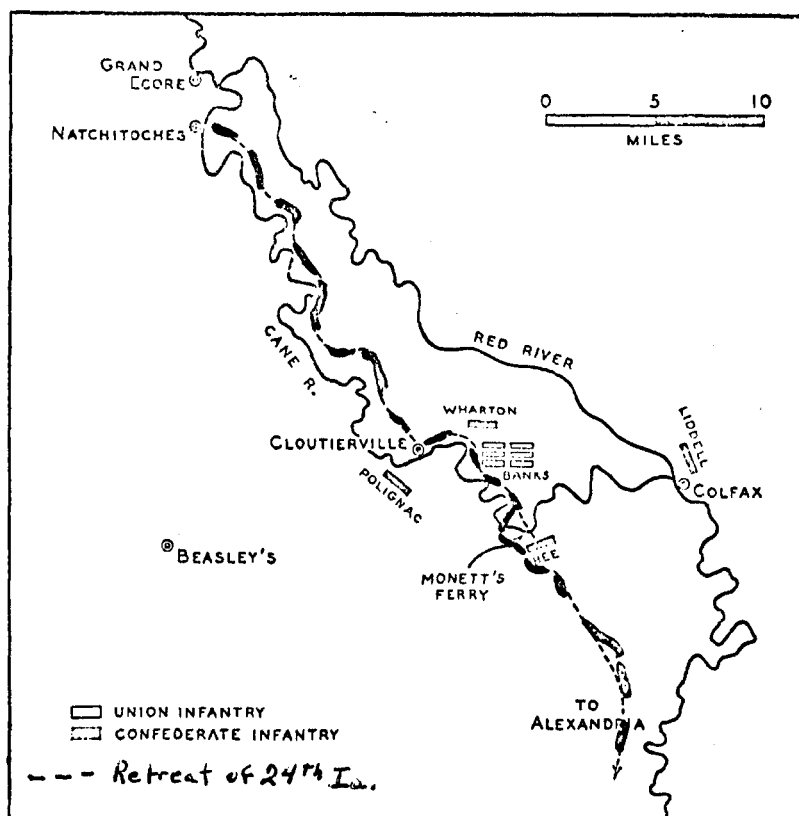


Figure 5.6. Retreat After the Battle of Pleasant Hill. Map adapted from Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, p. 227. The 24th Iowa moved in the middle of Banks' retreating army until the flanking movement at Monett's Ferry where it took the lead.

Union cavalry 1,000 men were chosen to remain behind, and the rest of the cavalry and the XIII Corps were ordered to march back to Grand Ecore as a guard to the wagon train. Late in the afternoon the members of the 24th, marching wearily behind the wagon train, heard the heavy cannonading which marked the start of the Battle of Pleasant Hill. Despite the Union success in this engagement, the whole army withdrew to Grand Ecore and began building fortifications. A semi-circular line of entrenchments was rapidly erected around Grand Ecore. The Federal army of approximately 25,000 men was surrounded by only 5,000 Confederates, but enough demonstrations were made that Banks greatly exaggerated the number of enemy troops that opposed him. With the level of the Red River steadily falling, General Banks decided to withdraw back to Alexandria. With Smith's divisions forming the rear guard, the army evacuated Grand Ecore April 21.⁴⁶

The 24th Iowa was one of the last regiments in the retreat, not getting into the line until two in the morning of April 22. The march soon developed into a race for Monett's Ferry on the Cane River. There was little water, and the exhausted troops actually fell asleep while marching. Under the burning sun the marchers pushed south toward Alexandria, in the hardest march of the Red River Campaign. The men in the 24th had slept only two hours when, on approaching the Cane River on April 23, they found that the Confederates had won the race, and now an enemy force threatened both the front and rear of the column.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Johnson, Red River Campaign, pp. 146-152, 215-16, and 220-22; Rigby Journal, April 9, 1864.

⁴⁷Johnson, Red River Campaign, pp. 222-23, 226-27; Hoag Diary, April 21 and 22, 1864.

Fording the Cane in waist-deep water, the regiment helped with a flanking move to rout the Confederates who were blocking the major crossing at Monett's Ferry. Succeeding in their flanking maneuver and protected by Smith's Corps fighting a delaying action in the rear, Banks' army succeeded in crossing the Cane River and reached Alexandria April 25.⁴⁸

Major Wright recorded:

During this retreat I think we had some of the most tiresome marches ever experienced. Marching all day and all night. Men would go to sleep walking along the road. We remained at Alexandria the remainder of the month. Threw up some slight works and done some skirmishing with the enemy a few of which followed us up.⁴⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Wilds, who had been absent since December 6 on recruiting service in Iowa, rejoined the regiment at Alexandria and resumed command. Wilds had been accompanied on the trip to Iowa by Captain Casebeer of Company D and an enlisted man from each company. Although over eighty men were recruited, the minimum number of eighty-three per regiment was not achieved. The idea of serving in a Temperance Regiment still must have appealed to a number of Iowans in Johnson County because Casebeer, one of the original temperance-preaching captains, returned with forty-four men for his company. Lucas reported that most were fit replacements, but four or five of the recruits were too young--15 or 16 years old--and one or two were too old and unable to stand the fatigue of a long march.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Johnson, Red River Campaign, pp. 227-34; Hoag Diary, April 23, 1864.

⁴⁹Wright Memoranda, April, 1864.

⁵⁰Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 226, 251; The Tipton Advertiser, July 14, 1864, p. 2. There appears to have been some controversy over the minimum number needed for mustering officers

Between April 25 and May 13, the 24th had several sharp skirmishes with the enemy in which a number of the regiment's men were wounded. Sergeant Hoag continued to suffer from a shortage of tobacco. During the fortifying of Grand Ecore he claimed the price reached \$8.00 a plug. Rigby reported that the feeling in the army was very intense against General Banks. General Smith and his XVI Corps had, in Rigby's opinion, taken all the laurels away from Banks. Lieutenant Lucas, admitting he had no right to criticize, wrote, "I must say that although General A. J. Smith is only a brigadier general, I think he is better able to handle an army on a battlefield than any of his superiors here."⁵¹

While at Alexandria the regiment was able to draw a much needed supply of clothing. Lucas reported that the men were especially in need of shoes. Four months' pay also was received by the 24th, and

in Iowa regiments. Lieutenant Colonel Wilds wrote Adjutant General Baker, June 20, 1864:

I have received the commissions for me and Major Wright with the request for our regt. not to be below minimum number before commission.

What is minimum number? Mustering officers have been using the guide of 64 men in a Co. for 2nd Lt. and 640 men in a regt. for Col. On the 1st of Jan. last the Col. of the 24th Indiana was mustered with about 700. Col. Green of the 29th Wisconsin was mustered with 650.

We have 698 enlisted men and 29 commissioned officers totaling 727. Co. wanting 2nd Lt.: Co. E--66, Co. F--81, Co. G--65, Co. K--69.

P. S. Mustering Officer was upset at being questioned. Major Wright and I have been mustered.

According to Shannon, Organization of the Union Army, pp. 269-70, the organization of the volunteer army as of September 6, 1862, defined the minimum number of enlisted men in a company as 83 before a second lieutenant could be commissioned. The regiment under this standard would have needed a minimum strength of 830 enlisted men before Wilds and Wright could have been mustered. The 24th Iowa never numbered over 800 enlisted men after its hard winter at Helena.

⁵¹Rigby Journal, April 25 and 26, and May 2, 1864; Hoag Diary, April 15 and 16, 1864; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), p. 247.

Rigby was proud that over \$1,200.00 was being expressed home to their families in Iowa. Rigby also received a letter from cousin Jesse who had been captured in the Battle of Sabine Cross Roads. Jesse and thirteen other members of the 24th Iowa were in a rebel prison at Tyler, Texas. When not skirmishing with the enemy around Alexandria, the regiment was often detailed to help with the construction of a dam to raise the Red River enough to allow the Union gunboats to pass downstream.⁵²

The low level of the water in the Red River had made it difficult for Porter's fleet to pass the rapids above Alexandria when Banks' army had advanced on Shreveport. Now the water level was even lower, and most of Porter's gunboats were trapped above the rapids. At first it appeared that the boats might have to be destroyed, but Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Bailey of the 4th Wisconsin suggested an old lumberman's trick of raising the river level by building wing dams to narrow the channel. The army was put to work constructing the dams, and by May 13 the gunboats were safely over the rapids.⁵³

General Banks falsely continued to believe his army was greatly outnumbered. With the gunboats now safely over the rapids at Alexandria, the Union troops began the last retreat of the Red River Campaign. On the morning of May 13, the Federal troops began marching down the river road toward Fort De Russy and Marksville. The town of Alexandria was set afire shortly before the troops departed. The order of march was the same as had been used in the march from Grand Ecore to Alexandria. The XIX Corps took the lead, followed by the baggage train guarded by

⁵²Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 246, 249; Rigby Journal, May 20, 1864; Hoag Diary, April 30, 1864.

⁵³Catton, Never Call Retreat, pp. 339-40.

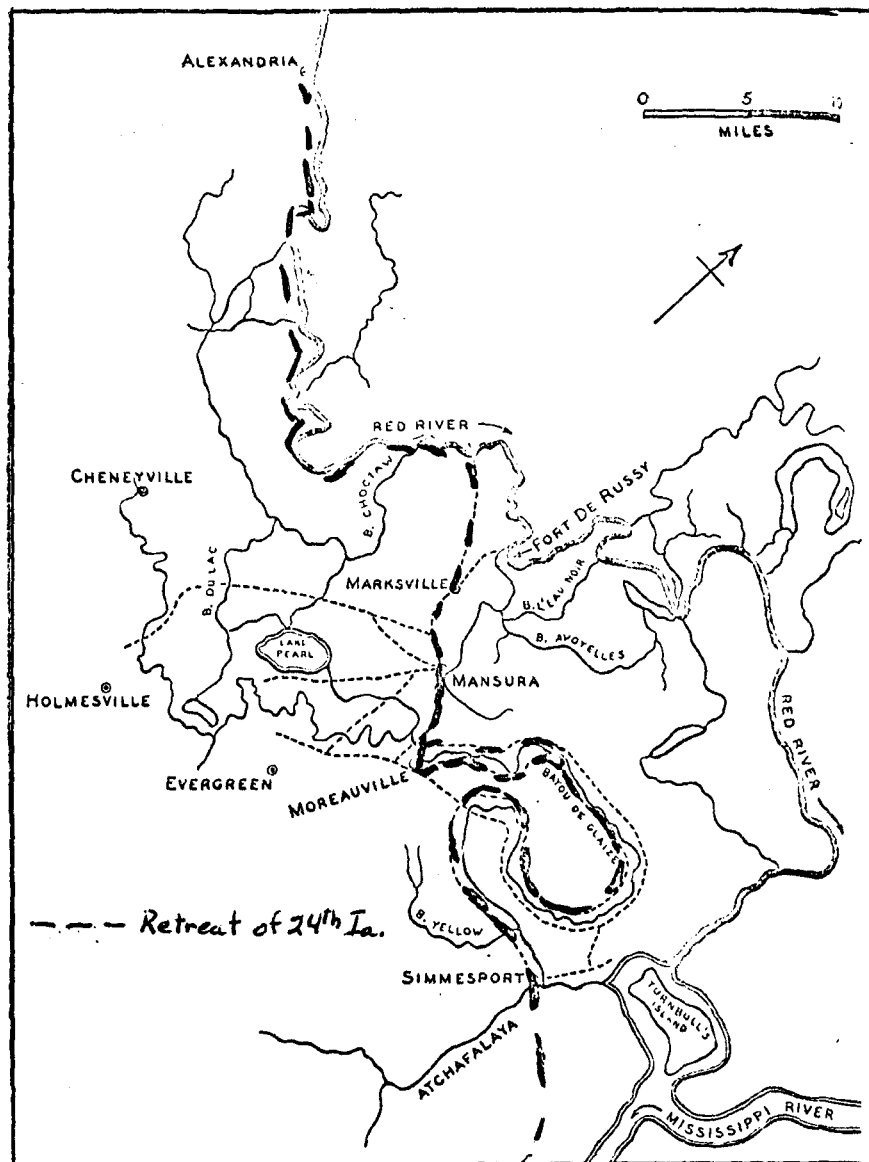


Figure 5.7. Retreat from Alexandria to the Mississippi River. Map adapted from Johnson, Red River Campaign, p. 90. Banks' retreating army became very strung out along the route.

the XIII Corps. Finally, Smith's command fell in at the rear of the column. Although harassed most of the way, the Union forces kept advancing, and by May 20 all of Banks' men were safely across Atchafalaya Bayou. On May 22 the 24th Iowa encamped with the rest of Banks' army at Morganza Bend on the Mississippi River. The Red River Campaign ended with a loss to the 24th Iowa of forty-eight men. The army as a whole suffered approximately 5,000. The officers and men of the regiment were all of the opinion that the loss had been in vain.⁵⁴

The 24th left Morganza on June 13, aboard the steamboat Star Light, and proceeded down the Mississippi River to Carrollton, Louisiana. Their camp was located at Greenville Station on the New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad. On June 21 the regiment moved about sixteen miles from New Orleans to Kenneville, a small town on the New Orleans and Jackson Railroad. Rumor of guerrilla activity at Thibodeaux, Louisiana, caused Brigadier General Cameron to order on June 26 the regiment to report there. The regiment celebrated the 4th of July at Thibodeaux in grand style, but they were sent to Algiers on July 6, where they were to report for embarkation to some unknown point. At Algiers the regiment received new uniforms, and their old Enfield rifles, much worn by service, were replaced by new Springfield rifled muskets.⁵⁵

Lieutenant Lucas was pleased about the exchange of weapons, although he claimed their Enfields had been intended to shoot 900 yards and were very accurate while the Springfields were only good for 600 yards. But the latter had strong lock springs and hardly ever misfired

⁵⁴Johnson, Red River Campaign, pp. 272, 276, 277; Wright Memoranda, May and June, 1864.

⁵⁵Wright Memoranda, June and July, 1864.

as the Enfields often did. Lucas claimed, "the lock springs of the Enfield are rather weak and the men often have to try twice before the load goes off, which is quite a disadvantage in battle." Lucas seemed to be very busy drilling the new recruits who had been brought from Iowa with Colonel Wilds.⁵⁶

Colonel Wilds had been honored in the July 4 celebration by the noncommissioned officers and privates with the formal presentation of a sword, belt, and sash, costing \$275. The sutler was allowed to sell beer to the privates and officers for a change, and the camp became uncommonly noisy and jubilant until late at night. The formal celebration ended with an evening parade through town. Rigby wrote:

I suppose the spectators were not very pleasant to us who were the performers. The fair maidens and even the widows of Thidodaz denied to give tone to the exercises by their presence who with pouting cherry lips and significant tosses of evening tresses viewed us as modest anti Dixie ladies would a troop of gypsies. We've obliged the witness of another drunken row in our company during the evening. It is time such things were played out.⁵⁷

After two weeks of comfortable camp living at Algiers, the 24th Iowa was ordered to board the ocean steamer Star of the South. Most of the men had already spent their last greenback on photographs and delicacies at the French Market. On July 23 the steamers raised anchor and moved south to the mouth of the Mississippi River. Crossing the bar the next morning, the 24th Iowa bade adieu to the Mississippi River.

⁵⁶Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 294, 300.

⁵⁷The Tipton Advertiser, July 28, 1864, p. 2; Rigby Journal, July 4, 1864.

Opening sealed orders Colonel Wilds learned that the regiment was bound for Washington, D. C. The western soldiers were now headed for the eastern theatre.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Jan., 1901), pp. 300-301.

Chapter 6

OPERATIONS IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

The morning of July 31, 1864, found the members of the 24th Iowa hurriedly writing letters to inform their loved ones in Iowa of the regiment's new location. Hardly believing it themselves, the 24th was now in Washington, D. C. The ten day ocean voyage had passed uneventfully for the average sailor, but to the farm boys who had never been out of sight of land before, the trip was high adventure. Schools of porpoises and a number of flying fish were noted, as were certain landmarks such as the lighthouse at Key West, Florida. For an experienced traveler like Lieutenant Lucas, the sea seemed calm; to the majority of the regiment a light breeze was a gale, and all were seasick to prove it. On July 9 the Star of the South arrived at Fortress Monroe near the mouth of the James River. The 24th was then ordered to Washington and to report to Major General Henry W. Halleck for further orders. The ocean steamer was able to proceed up the Potomac River only as far as Alexandria, Virginia, and the regiments transferred all their goods to a ferryboat. Arriving in the city about midnight, the troops encamped on the wharf until morning.¹

¹Wright Memoranda, July, 1864; Hoag Diary, July 22-30, 1864; Rigby Journal, July 22-30, 1864; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1901), pp. 300-302.

Halleck's orders called for the 24th Iowa to store all extra camp and garrison equipment and to report, as soon as possible, to Major General William H. Emory, commanding a detachment of the XIX Corps at Monacacy, Maryland. The regiment would be limited to only two baggage wagons as compared with the four or five wagons allowed during the campaigns in Louisiana. A great deal of equipment, especially that belonging to officers which had been brought from Louisiana, had to be marked and stored. Lieutenant Lucas, still the only commissioned officer in his company, was kept busy taking inventory, but Private Rigby and Sergeant Hoag managed to slip off and see the sights. Sergeant Hoag had already been excited by the lush countryside on the trip up the Potomac; now the White House and Capitol building would receive a closer inspection. Rigby first had to change his clothes after being confined for so long in "a filthy old ship." About 2 o'clock in the afternoon the regiment assembled and marched to the depot of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. On the cross-city tramp Lucas finally got to observe some of the sights. He was not very impressed with the city, but the Capitol, with its marble columns and large dome, appeared to the Belgian to be the largest and nicest building he had ever seen. The heat was intense, and as the 24th marched through the streets putting on a show for the passersby who greeted them, several, still weak from the sea voyage, were sunstruck.²

Before the regiment boarded the train they were given a refreshing supper at the Soldiers' Home by the Christian Commission. The ham, bread, and butter, and coffee with milk were delicious, but the presence of the

²Hoag Diary, July 31, 1864; Rigby Journal, July 31, 1864; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1901), pp. 302-303.

nice ladies that served the meal was even more appreciated than the food. Since the 24th was the first regiment from Iowa to arrive in Washington, the women were quite curious about Iowa and the adventures these western soldiers had had. It was a marked contrast from the open hostility displayed by many of the civilians in Louisiana, and the men were glad to be in Union territory.³

Traveling at night the troop train passed through Elkridge Landing, about thirty miles from Washington, turned left, and proceeded fifty miles to Monocacy Creek. What little of the country Lucas could observe as they traveled during the night seemed to be hilly with few large farms. The crops of rye, winter wheat, and oats had been harvested and looked good, but the corn crop was poor. Each farm appeared to have a lush orchard of apple, pear or peach trees. Private Rigby was impressed with the fine water in Monocacy Creek near the camp. It was quite a contrast to the muddy bayous of Louisiana. The camp was located twenty-eight miles from Harper's Ferry and about three miles east of Frederick City. Although there were no Rebels in the area, the campground had been the scene of a Union defeat on July 9, 1864. The bivouac was very active with about fifteen regiments of infantry already in camp, most of them assigned to the XIX Corps. Although they had expected to find the 22nd and 28th Iowa there, the 24th was the only Hawkeye regiment in camp.⁴

The 24th had been assigned to the Shenandoah Valley. Throughout the war the Valley had acted both as a storehouse of food for the Confederate forces in Virginia, and as a natural invasion route to

³Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1901), pp. 302-304.

⁴Ibid., p. 304; Rigby Journal, August 1, 1864.

Washington and other cities in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Confederate generals had won fame and glory in their advances up the lush highway, while Union generals had seen their promising careers destroyed along with their armies. In July, 1864, Lieutenant General Jubal A. Early, with approximately 20,000 Confederate troops, had moved threateningly down the Valley. The Union commander in the Valley, Major General David Hunter, had withdrawn his forces into West Virginia, leaving the route to Washington open. With a hastily collected force of 7,000 Union troops, Major General Lew Wallace had fought a desperate battle against Early on July 9 at Monocacy Creek but was forced to withdraw. The day's delay did give the War Department time to put convalescents from military hospitals, militia, quartermaster troops, government clerks, and any other volunteers into the fortification around Washington before Early arrived on July 11. On July 12, General Horatio Wright and his two divisions of the VI Corps arrived to calm the almost hysterical citizens of the Union's capital. Sent by Grant from the siege lines around Petersburg, they were given the major responsibility of defending the capital. In face of these reinforcements Early withdrew on July 13. The major problem facing the Union in countering further Confederate success in the Valley was a lack of unity of command. To solve the problem Grant appointed Major General Philip Sheridan to command the operations in the Shenandoah Valley.⁵

Sheridan took command of the Union troops in what was then called

⁵Edward J. Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, Jubal Early's Nemesis (Harrisburg, Penn.: The Stackpole Company, 1961), pp. 140-46 (hereinafter referred to as Sheridan in the Shenandoah); Richard O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable (Indianapolis, Ind.: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953), pp. 186-93.

the Middle Division on August 7, 1864. He was no one's first choice for the job. Lincoln and Stanton felt that Sheridan was too young, and Grant would have preferred Major Generals William B. Franklin or George G. Meade. Sheridan himself was reluctant to leave his successes in the Army of the Potomac's cavalry corps for a field of operation that had spelled disaster to the careers of so many Union generals. Nevertheless, the youthful Major General set about the task of organizing an army with which to defeat Early and to make the Valley of no further use to the Confederacy as a natural food supply. When Sheridan took command of the Army of the Shenandoah, it consisted of the VI Corps comprising three divisions under Major General Horatio Wright, the XIX Corps consisting of two divisions under Brigadier General William H. Emory, the VIII Corps numbering no more than one medium-sized division under Brigadier General George Cook, and two cavalry divisions under Brigadier General Alfred Torbert for a total force of approximately 40,000 men. Except for Wright's VI Corps, most of the units were untried or had dubious reputations, such as that of the XIX Corps after the Red River Campaign.⁶

Sheridan continued the troop movement up the Valley, belatedly started by General Hunter in late July before Sheridan relieved him. Early's army was pushed back as far as Cedar Creek, where the Confederates strongly entrenched at Fisher's Hill. Warned by General Grant about the middle of August to act on the defensive rather than risk an unsuccessful battle, Sheridan, mistakenly thinking the enemy force equal to his own, withdrew north down the Valley. In the process, however, he destroyed hay and grain, carried off livestock, and arrested all the men

⁶Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, pp. 148-53; O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, pp. 192-96.

of Loudoun County under fifty years of age and capable of bearing arms. The retreat halted at Halltown where, protected by rivers on both flanks, the Army of the Shenandoah dug in to await the arrival of Early's troops.⁷

Before General Sheridan had even taken command of the Army of the Shenandoah had been properly organized, the 24th Iowa, along with the other regiments camped at Monocacy Creek, were moved forward to Harper's Ferry. The midnight train ride of August 4 was in response to a rumor that General Early was coming up the Valley again. The regiment was temporarily assigned to the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, the XIX Corps with Lieutenant Colonel Wilds acting as brigade commander. Passing through Harper's Ferry, the regiment noted that the arsenal and engine house in which John Brown and his band took shelter were in ruins. On August 8, 1864, General Sheridan took command in person, and the men were ordered to make preparation to march in two days.⁸

Arriving at Cedar Creek on August 12, the men still soft and weak from the ocean voyage, suffered terribly from the heat. After the first day's march, Lieutenant Lucas reported his company had only sixteen men complete the march out of forty-three who started. The majority had stopped along the road to rest as they became overcome with heat and fatigue. Most rejoined the regiment in the evening, but on the 12th the same falling-out was repeated. While the 24th only numbered 150 men when they stopped, Rigby reported some regiments had only ten men finish

⁷Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, pp. 156-58; O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, pp. 196-97.

⁸Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1901), pp. 349-51; Wright Memoranda, Aug., 1864; Rigby Journal, Aug. 5 and 8, 1864.

the march on time. The private related that a Zouave officer who struck one of his men with a sword for falling back was shot by the man for his cruelty. Rations were low, and the men subsisted on green corn and green apples.⁹

On August 15, the troops at Cedar Creek began falling back to Charlestown at which place they arrived on August 18. At Charlestown Brigadier General Cuvier Grover joined the XIX Corps with reinforcements from Washington. A reorganization of the XIX Corps took place which resulted in the 24th being reassigned to the 4th Brigade, 2nd Division of the XIX Corps. Colonel David Shunk of the 8th Indiana Veteran Volunteers commanded the brigade; General Grover commanded the 2nd Division; Brevet Major General Emory commanded the XIX Corps. The 24th Iowa was pleased that the 22nd Iowa and the 28th Iowa were among the reinforcements. The 24th and 28th Iowa were once again in the same brigade, and the 22nd was in the 2nd Brigade of the same division. The men enjoyed plenty of fresh roasting ears, but foraging was dangerous because two men were killed by guerrillas. Despite the fact that the 24th was once again retreating, Lucas wrote, "I like the way General Sheridan marches his army, and I do not think we will ever be taken by surprise while on a march."¹⁰

After three days the army withdrew again to Bolivar Heights between Halltown and Harper's Ferry and entrenched. The fortifications ran along the tops of three series of hills, each higher than the one

⁹Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1901), pp. 373-74; Rigby Journal, Aug. 10 and 12, 1864.

¹⁰Hoag Diary, Aug. 19, 1864; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1901), pp. 374, 375; Rigby Journal, Aug. 20, 1864.

directly in front of it. Lucas judged the position almost impregnable. The regiment spent most of its time digging entrenchments or skirmishing with the enemy. The month of August ended with the regiment nearly four months behind in pay. Lieutenant Lucas wrote home asking his brother to send him twenty dollars. He claimed that it cost an officer six or seven dollars every ten days for subsistence alone. He also had received a commission as first lieutenant but could not be mustered until the current first lieutenant returned from a sick furlough and was mustered as captain. The troops had no wagons to transport baggage, and since the weather had turned cold at night, many of the men suffered because they carried no extra clothes. Rigby reported an act of barbarity: "a wounded man left on the battlefield last Sunday was found buried with a stake through his neck."¹¹

On September 3, the regiment moved camp from Charlestown to Berryville, Virginia, where they made several reconnaissances during the month, one as far as Openquen Creek. While the VI Corps had a lively engagement during the advance to Berryville, the Army of the Shenandoah remained on the defensive from mid-August to mid-September. Sheridan's army came under harsh criticism for its inactivity, but Grant wanted Sheridan to wait until some of Early's forces were recalled to Richmond, Virginia. On September 16, a Quaker schoolteacher, Miss Rebecca Wright, passed word to General Sheridan that a portion of the Confederate army around Winchester had left for Richmond. Sheridan

¹¹Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (Oct., 1901), pp. 337, 379-81; Rigby Journal, Aug. 29 and 31, 1864. Rigby was probably referring to a skirmish battle between some of Sheridan's men and some of Early's. Both sides were constantly probing for a weak spot in each other's defenses.

received permission from Grant to take the offensive, and the Army of the Shenandoah was set in motion on September 19 against Early's army at Winchester.¹²

Sheridan's scheme to attack the scattered divisions of Early's forces which were in and around Winchester was carefully planned out to the last detail. The 3rd Cavalry Division would lead the advance followed by the VI, XIX, and VIII Corps. The VI Corps would form on the left, and the XIX Corps would hold the right while the VIII Corps moved farther to the left to join with the cavalry in seizing and holding the Valley Turnpike south of Winchester. Meanwhile the other two cavalry divisions would move up the Valley Pike from the north and smash into the enemy's left and rear while the center was under attack and the enemy's right was being turned by the VIII Corps.¹³

If Sheridan's plan worked, the classic maneuver of a double envelopment would cut off Early's escape route and destroy the Confederate Army. The plan was a general's dream, but inspiration on paper seldom works properly when applied on the field of combat. The plan demanded excellent timing and execution by all parties before Early could regroup his scattered divisions. The biggest weakness lay in the requirement that Wilson's cavalry and three infantry corps would have to move on a single road from Berryville, which ran through a narrow canyon. A traffic jam developed in the canyon, completely upsetting Sheridan's timetable.¹⁴

¹²O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, pp. 199-200.

¹³Ibid., pp. 200-201.

¹⁴Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, pp. 192-93.

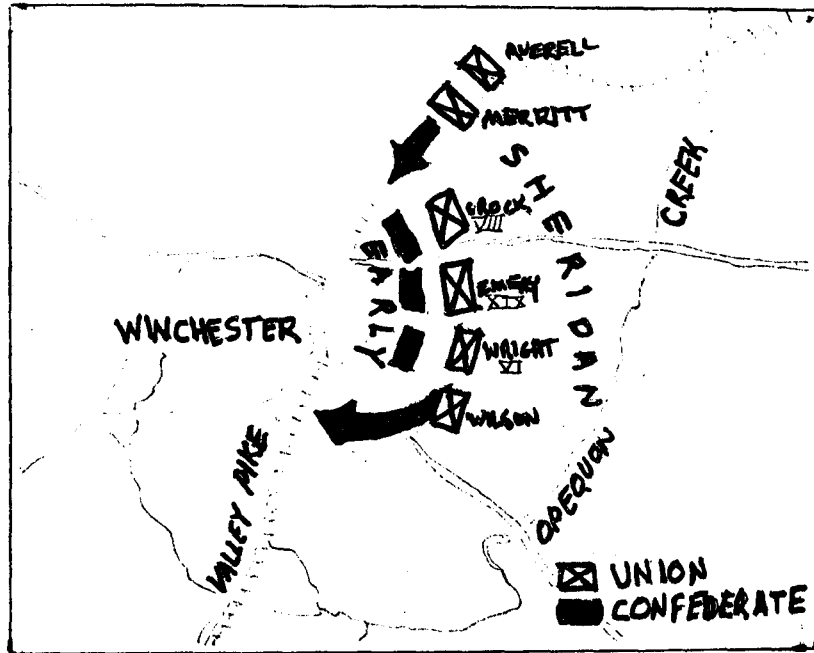


Figure 6.2. Sheridan's Plan of Double Envelopment. Map adapted from O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, p. 201.

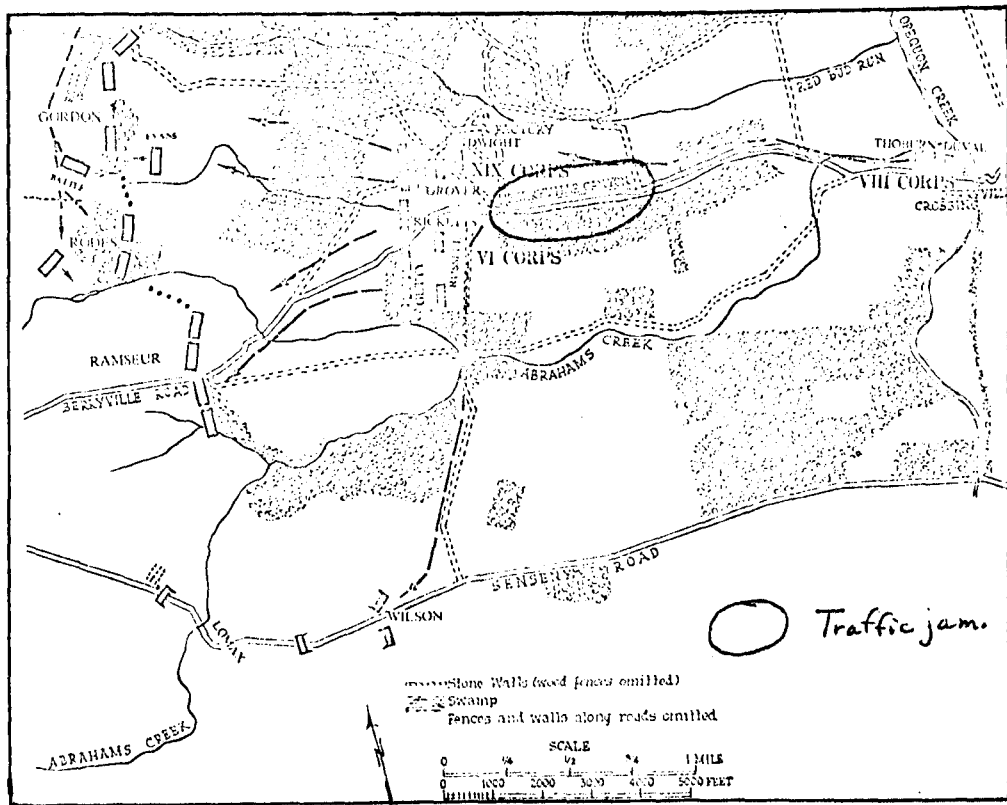


Figure 6.3. Traffic Jam in the Berryville Road Canyon. Map adapted from Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, p. 196.

Private Rigby reported:

We broke camp at two o'clock and marched in two columns one on each side of the road while the artillery and the train followed between. Our columns halted at day light to permit the 6th Corps and the train to pass which occupied several hours. We would have followed directly after the 6th Corps instead of after the train. The cavalry attacked the enemy at this time driving them from their position on the Openquon, thereby affording a safe crossing for the infantry & artillery. By our delay we were marched so rapidly that the men were exhausted by the time we came up.¹⁵

General Early benefitted by the delay. Concentrating his forces in a defensive line, Early waited for the Federal host. For Sheridan, however, there was no turning back, and the 24th Iowa would play a major role in the coming battle.¹⁶

In his official report Major Wright recorded that on September 18 orders had been issued from Sheridan's headquarters requiring all transportation to be sent the rear. Only what baggage that could be carried by the men or on officers' horses would be allowed in the upcoming movement. The 24th Iowa, still in the 4th Brigade, 2nd Division, Detachment of XIX Corps, advanced along the Winchester Pike at 3 o'clock the morning of September 19. The XIX Corps was halted about three miles west of Berryville for the VI Corps to pass and take the advance. The VIII Corps moved by another road to the 24th Iowa's right. About 9 o'clock A. M. heavy skirmishing and some cannonading was heard in the front near Winchester. Orders were received to push forward rapidly, and at a point about three miles from Winchester the XIX Corps turned to the right and formed a line of battle to the right of the VI Corps.¹⁷

¹⁵Rigby Journal, Sept. 19, 1864.

¹⁶Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, pp. 200-203.

¹⁷Wright Memoranda, Report of the Battle of Winchester, Va. to N. B. Baker, Adj. Gen. State of Iowa from Lieut. Col. Ed Wright, Nov. 19, 1864.

The 2nd Division formed in two lines with the 1st and 3rd brigade in the front row and the 2nd and 4th Brigades stationed behind. The 24th Iowa was positioned in the second row on the left of center with the 28th Iowa on its left, the 18th Indiana on the right, and the 8th Indiana on the extreme right of the line. At 12 noon the lines advanced through a strip of woodland about a third of a mile wide. Beyond the woodland was an open field about one-fourth of a mile wide and beyond that another woods. When the second line emerged into the open field the first line was just entering the woods beyond, driving the enemy's skirmishers.¹⁸

The enemy discovered the right flank of the XIX Corps was unprotected and threw a heavy column of infantry and one battery of artillery to the right of the advance and at right angles to the lines. As a result of the enemy's flank fire the first line fell back through the second which was then about halfway across the open field. The second line continued to press forward steadily. Wright reported:

When within one hundred yards of the woods, the column that had been thrown around on our right open out with musketry and canister shot, showering the iron hail along and almost parallel with our ranks, and mowing down our men by the score. As soon as the flank movement was discovered, the whole line was ordered to fall back to the woods, which was done in as good order as could be expected under the circumstances. The line was reformed and advanced about one fourth of the way across the field and halted, holding the enemy at bay until some troops could be thrown around to our right, as the enemy's lines extended near a half mile to the right of ours. Up to this time the 24th had had, two Officers wounded mortally and two more severely. Six enlisted men killed and about 30 wounded. This line was held under a most destructive artillery fire from both the front and right flank for about two hours, when General Crook came up with the Army of Western Virginia and formed on the right, relieving most of the 4th Brigade, Captains Rigby, Smith, and Martin, with Lieut. Lucas, had been posted with their commands in a point of timber nearest the enemy, with orders to hold it at all

¹⁸Ibid.

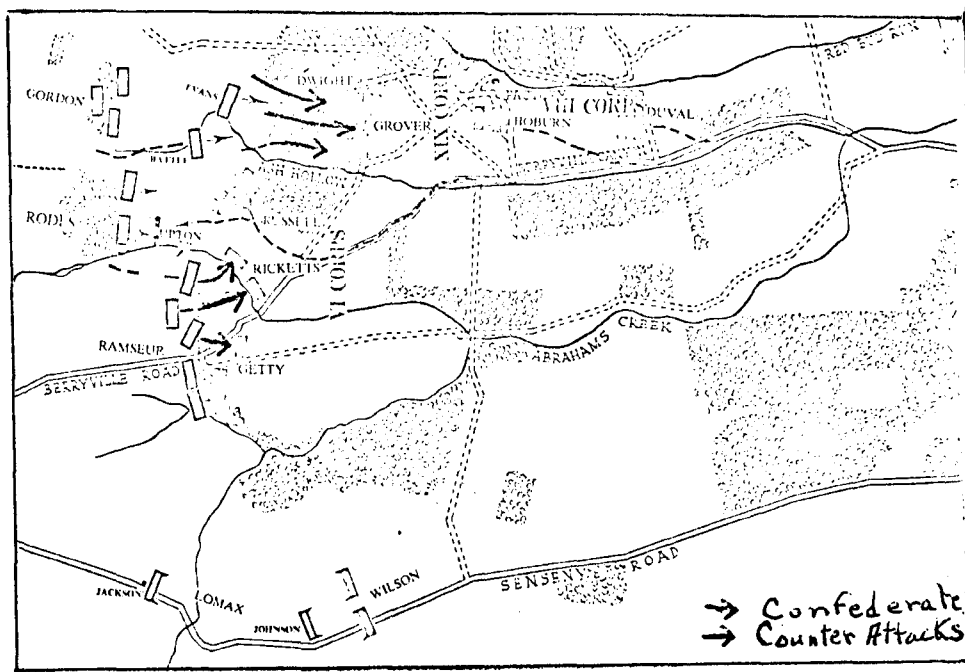


Figure 6.4. Early's Counter Attack. Map adapted from Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, p. 208.

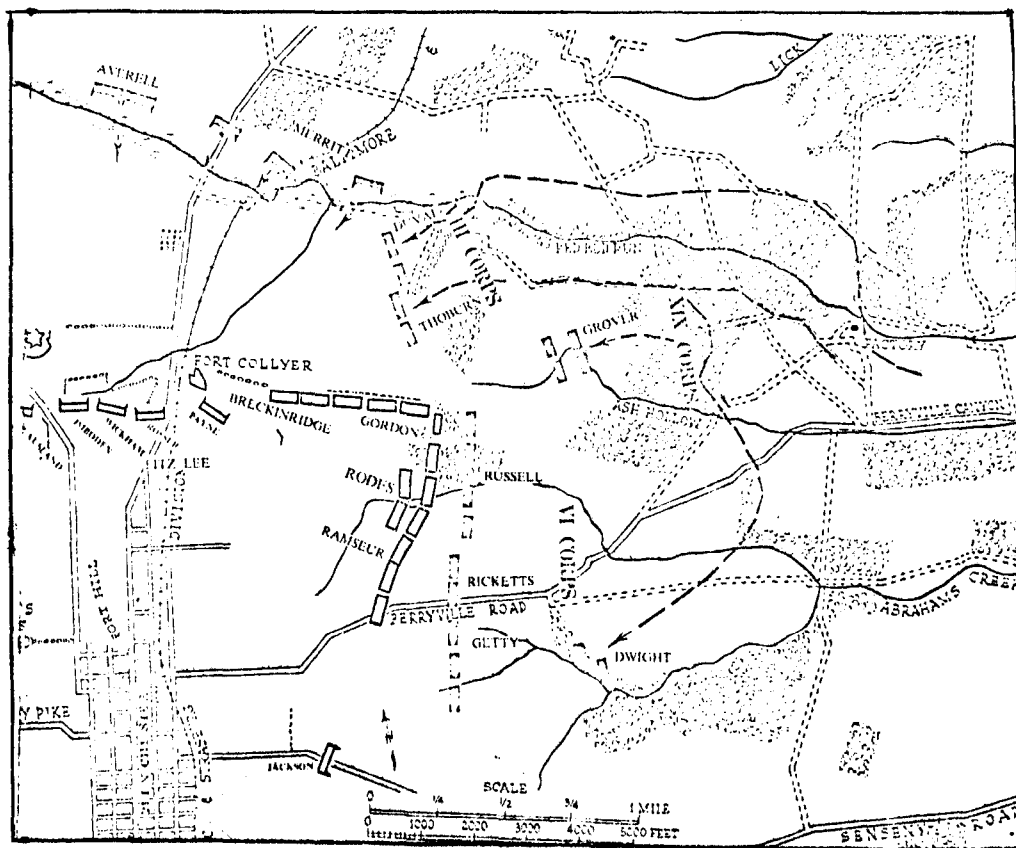


Figure 6.5. Final Attack at Winchester. Map adapted from Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, p. 229.

hazards and were not relieved. I had supplied them with ammunition, and when the fresh troops in making the final charge came up even with them they moved forward with the line which drove the enemy from every position taken until it became a perfect route.¹⁹

After most of the 24th had been relieved they replenished their ammunition and were ordered to the extreme right to prevent any other attempts by the Confederates to flank the Union lines. The arrival of the two cavalry divisions from the north made regiment movement to the right unnecessary, and after following the enemy two miles, the 24th went into camp near Winchester. Casualties totaled seventy-four killed, wounded and missing.²⁰

The crucial point in the battle occurred when, according to Wright's report, the column was flanked and forced to fall back "in as good order as could be expected under the circumstances." Early had counterattacked at the point where the VI and XIX Corps were loosely joined. Brigadier General Jas. B. Rickett's 3rd Division of the VI Corps and Brigadier General Cuvier Grover's 2nd Division of the XIX Corps were driven back in confusion. As panic began to develop, the retreating regiments which had been shattered by a deadly Rebel crossfire were rallied finally by the efforts of their line officers.²¹

One instance of coolness and discipline, which contrasted curiously with the general panic, was noticed by Captain Bradbury of the First Maine Battery, now Major and Chief of Artillery on Gen. Emory's Staff. Through the midst of the confusion came a captain of infantry, Rigby of the Twenty fourth Iowa, leading a sergeant and twelve men, all marching as composedly as if returning from drill. 'Captain you are not going to retreat any further, I hope' said Bradbury. 'Certainly not!' was the reply. 'Halt; front.'

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.; Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, p. 210; O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, pp. 202-203.

Three cheers, men; hip, hip, hurrah!' The little band cheered lustily. It was the first note of defiance that broke the desperate monotony of the panic; it gave heart to every one who heard it, and made an end of retreat in that part of the field. In a few minutes the platoon swelled to a battalion composed of men from half a dozen regiments.²²

The breakthrough in front of General Ricket's division of the VI Corps was stopped by the members of Battery E, Fifth Maine Light Artillery Regiment, who threw hatfuls of grapeshot into their guns and halted the charging Rebels. At this point Sheridan committed General Crook's VIII Corps, which began turning the Rebels' left flank. In the Union counterattack Private Rigby claimed that many had to replenish their ammunition from the boxes of their fallen comrades.²³

According to Charles L. Longley:

It was from this point that Major Ed Wright started back after much needed ammunition and had ridden some distance when a solid shot having passed over the line, ricocheted from the ground and, striking his horse between the hams, passed clear through his belly and lodged between his foreshoulders. The old fellow spread his feet, stiffened himself, stood fast while the Major dismounted and remained standing like a statue while the saddle and bridle were taken off--dying on his feet before the collapse came. The Major gave the saddle and bridle into the charge of a convenient darkey, who was just then making great haste to change his location, and went on after the ammunition--bring back a box of cartridges on his shoulder, instead of on 'Old Jack' as he had anticipated doing.²⁴

²²The Tipton Advertiser, Jan. 5, 1865, p. 3. Lucas confirms Captain Rigby's presence at the rallying point but claims he helped form a skirmish line only 10 rods away and Lieutenant William Kelly had shouted with his sword drawn for the men in Rigby's company to form on Lucas' skirmish line. The story was apparently first published in the December, 1864 Harpers Monthly. In the Official Record, Ser. 1, Vol. XLIII, Part I, pp. 357-58, Captain Albert N. Bradbury praises Captain Rigby of the 24th for rallying his men around the Maine Battery.

²³Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, pp. 202-203; Rigby Journal, Sept. 19, 1864.

²⁴Charles L. Longley, "The Twenty-Fourth Iowa Volunteers, from Winchester to Davenport," Annals of Iowa (July, 1894), p. 449. Hereinafter referred to as Annals of Iowa. Thad Smith's death left his summary of the 24th Iowa's service incomplete which Chas. L. Longley, a sergeant in Company B, completed.

In addition to the VIII Corps on the right, Averall's cavalry arrived causing panic on the Confederate left and a disorderly withdrawal from Winchester. Darkness covered Early's retreat, and Sheridan's exhausted army was allowed to rest the night at Winchester. Following upon the retreating Confederates on September 20, the Federal army found the enemy strongly entrenched at Fisher's Hill. On the evening of September 22, Early's army was driven from its stronghold by General Crook's VIII Corps which had secretly flanked the Confederate position and took the Rebel army completely by surprise.²⁵ The battle of Fisher's Hill was such a complete victory with such little loss of life that Lieutenant Colonel Wright did not make a report of the 24th Iowa's part in the engagement until General Grover ordered that the banner of the 24th was to be inscribed with the Battle of Fisher's Hill, Virginia. Wright wrote that about sunset the 24th had taken part in a feint attack on the front of the Confederate lines while Crook's Corps launched the surprise flank attack which completely routed the enemy. Though it was dark when the battle ended the regiment was ordered to push forward in hopes of capturing more of the fleeing enemy. The pursuit was kept up all night arriving at Woodstock, Virginia, at daylight. The Confederate rear guard had frequently fired on the 24th during the night pursuit, but fortunately the regiment had suffered only five men wounded.²⁶

The Army of the Shenandoah continued to harass and pursue the Confederates for the remainder of the month, finally stopping at

²⁵O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, pp. 208-209.

²⁶Wright Memoranda, Report of Battle of Fisher's Hill, Va., to N. B. Baker, Adj. Gen. State of Iowa from Lieut. Col. Ed Wright, Nov. 19, 1864.

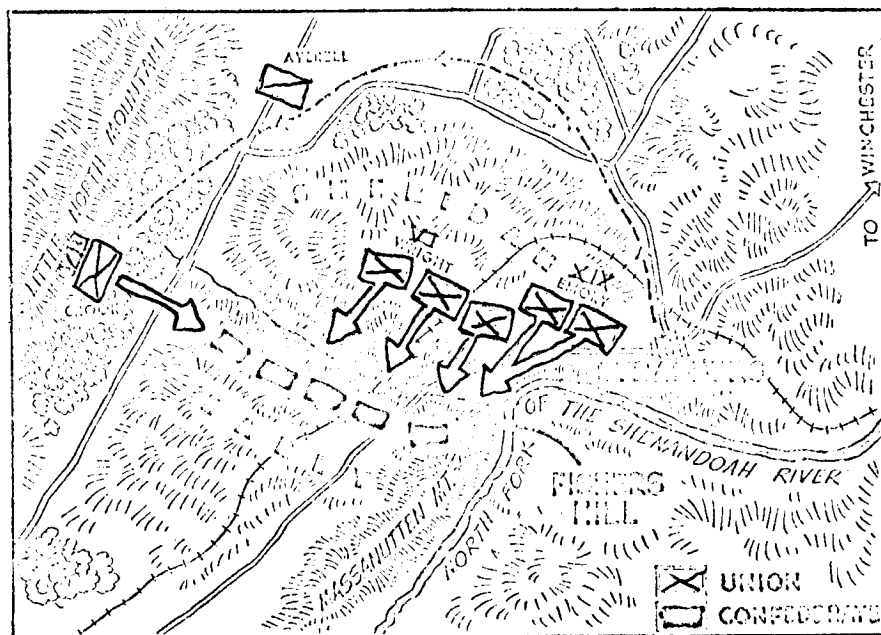


Figure 6.6. Victory Plan for Fisher's Hill. Map adapted from O'Connor, *Sheridan the Inevitable*, p. 207.

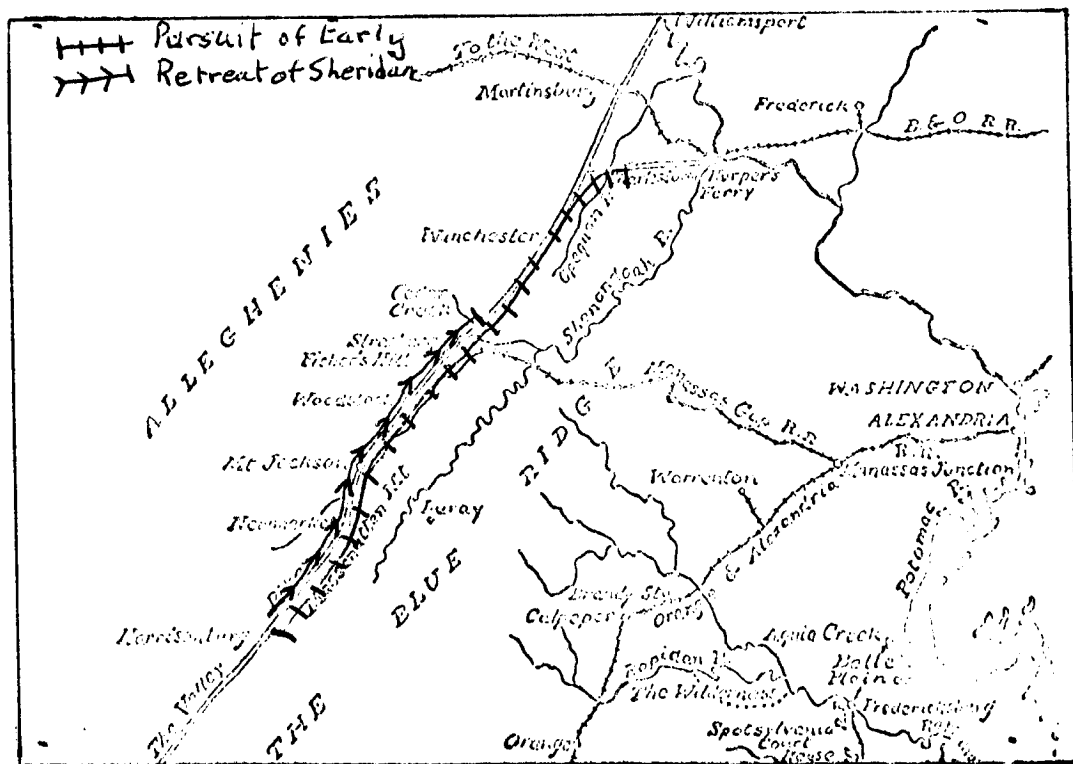


Figure 6.7. Pursuit of Early and Retreat of Sheridan. Map adapted from Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, title page.

Harrisburg, Virginia. The section of the Valley that Sheridan's troops found themselves in had not been occupied by a Union army since the war began. Complying with Grant's orders, the troops drove off all the cattle, destroyed the food and forage they could not carry, and burned the grain mills. The village of Dayton was put to the torch when bushwhackers were accused of living there. General Sheridan desired a more defensible position for his forces, and on October 6, the army withdrew north to Strasburg. The troops continued their destruction as they withdrew down the Valley, finally making an entrenched camp on the east bank of Cedar Creek about five miles northeast of Strasburg.²⁷

General Early once again followed the Federal withdrawal, harassing the rear and flanks at every opportunity. Sheridan made a flying trip to Washington and was fourteen miles away at Winchester when Early attacked the Union Army at Cedar Creek. The Federal Army was camped along the north bank of Cedar Creek with Crook's VIII Corps on the left, Emory's XIX Corps in the center, and Wright's VI Corps on the right. Early's attack struck the VIII Corps in the flank at dawn, and rolling up the Union line had, by noon, succeeded in controlling the field and sending the Army of the Shenandoah up the Valley in full retreat.²⁸

The 24th, like the rest of the Union Army, was caught completely by surprise. Puffed up by their victories at Winchester and Fisher's Hill, the soldiers had settled into the monotony of camp life believing they were secure from attack. The general health of the regiment was

²⁷Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, pp. 212-17; Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, pp. 265-67.

²⁸Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, p. 221.

excellent, but their clothing had suffered during the campaign. Many of the men were nearly barefooted, and while their Springfield rifle muskets were in excellent condition, the issue of clothing on October 14 was greatly appreciated even if it was done in the middle of the night. Now confident that they would not be attacked, the regiment slept soundly the night of the 18th, not even suspecting danger.²⁹

General Crook's corps, which was only at division strength, was quickly overrun by General John B. Gordon's Confederates, numbering three divisions. At the same time the two remaining infantry divisions in Early's army made a frontal assault. The Confederates had moved quietly into position during the night and captured Crook's pickets with few shots fired. The overpowering attack out of the morning fog gave Crook's corps no time to form ranks. Many of the VIII Corps survivors reported making a rather undignified exit from the rear of their dogtents as the Rebels were greeting them "good morning" from the other end.³⁰

The XIX Corps, now alerted and with some other regiments prepared for an early morning reconnaissance, offered stout resistance at first. The problem, of course, was that the XIX Corps did not realize they had been flanked and that the VIII Corps had been completely broken. Through the thick morning fog, colors could not be distinguished at more than twenty yards away. Where the VIII Corps should have been came a column that was not identified until "damned Yankees" was heard. Flanked and outnumbered, the XIX Corps fell back toward the VI Corps

²⁹Wright Memoranda, Oct., 1864.

³⁰Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, p. 221; Longley, Annals of Iowa (Oct., 1894), p. 557.

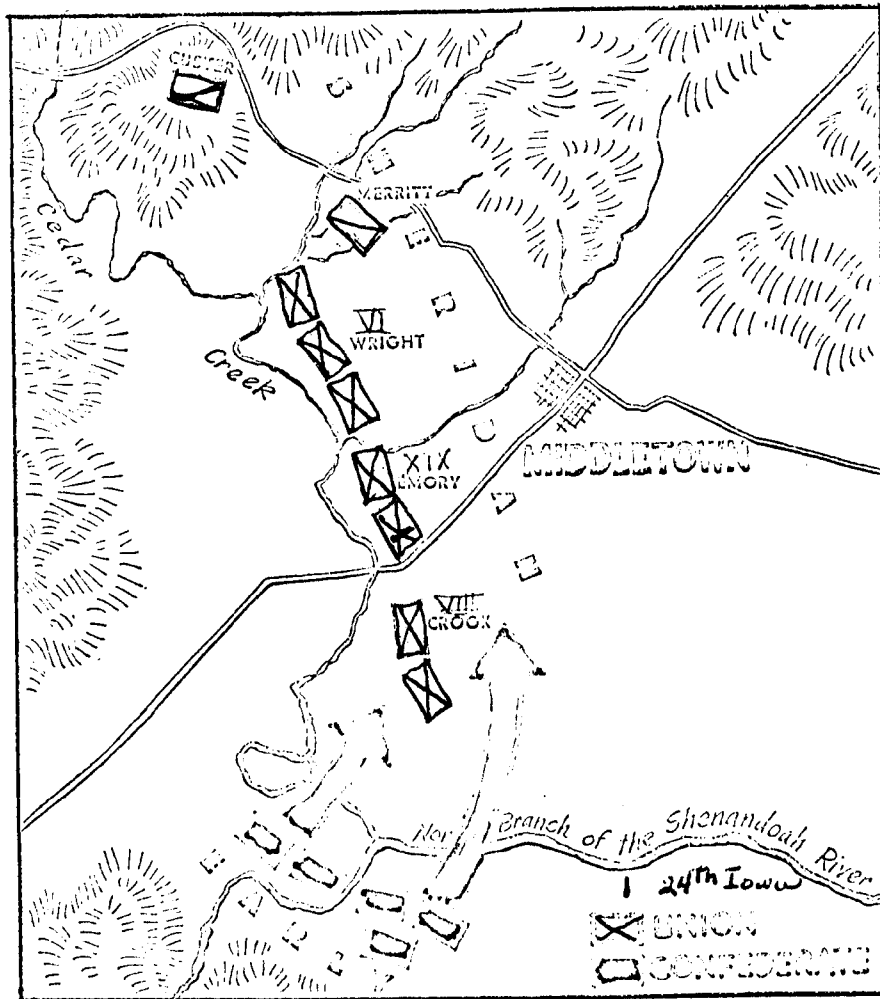


Figure 6.8. Early's Plan of Attack. Map adapted from O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, p. 222.

which had at least been able to swing around to cover their own flank before the Confederates struck.³¹

Major Wright recorded that Colonel Wilds had been informed the evening of October 18 a reconnaissance would be made at 5 o'clock the next morning and the 4th Brigade would move up to the works and occupy that position while the 1st and 3rd Brigades advanced. The following morning, believing the reconnaissance would not last more than one or two hours, everything except arms and accouterments were left in the tents. There was little alarm caused when firing was heard from the pickets of the VIII Corps, because the regiment assumed it had been caused by the reconnaissance. The fog was dense, and as it was not yet daylight, it was almost impossible to distinguish objects at any distance. As the firing became heavier on the left, the brigade was ordered to move by the left flank, until the left of the 24th rested on the pike.³²

The fog was so dense that it was impossible to tell what was in front of the regiment, and as the VIII Corps was falling back, fire had to be held until the enemy was almost upon them. The brigade's commander, Colonel Shunk, discovered that the enemy was attempting to flank the left of the line, and he ordered the brigade to fall back about five hundred yards. Finally as it appeared that the whole division was about to be surrounded, General Grover ordered the men to fall

³¹Longley, Annals of Iowa (Oct., 1894), pp. 556-60.

³²Wright Memoranda, Report of the Battle of Cedar Creek, Va., to N. B. Baker, Adj. Gen. State of Iowa from Lieut. Col. Ed Wright, Nov. 19, 1864.

back as rapidly as possible in the direction of the camp of the VI Corps.³³

The enemy came in heavy force on the regiment's left and captured four officers and about forty men. The 24th Iowa's brigade fell back nearly one mile and formed to the right of the VI Corps. Previous to this time Colonel Wilds had been wounded and carried from the field. Wright had also received a bruise on his hip from a piece of shell and a wound from a musket ball on the left arm near the elbow. Wright was unable to ride for almost an hour, and the regiment was commanded by Captain Leander Clark during the retreat.³⁴

The order to fall back had turned into a foot race for many of the men of the 24th, and here most of the losses came. Nearly all the officers in the regiment were wounded. Captain Pound was hit by a minie ball in the foot in the act of stepping and was hurled to the ground. He reported that he was sure his leg was gone, but after inspection with both hands, he scrambled to his feet minus the sole of his boot. Major Wright, wretching from the effects of a musket ball passing through his arm near the elbow, bent over his horse hugging it around the neck with his good arm. Colonel Wilds was shot from his mount while carrying the colors of an Indiana regiment whose bearer had fallen in the melee. He was carried from the field with an arm shattered above the elbow. Lucas came the nearest he ever had to losing his life when a bullet hit a sapling in front of him and touched the tip of his ear. The rout was finally halted on a plateau to the north, where

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

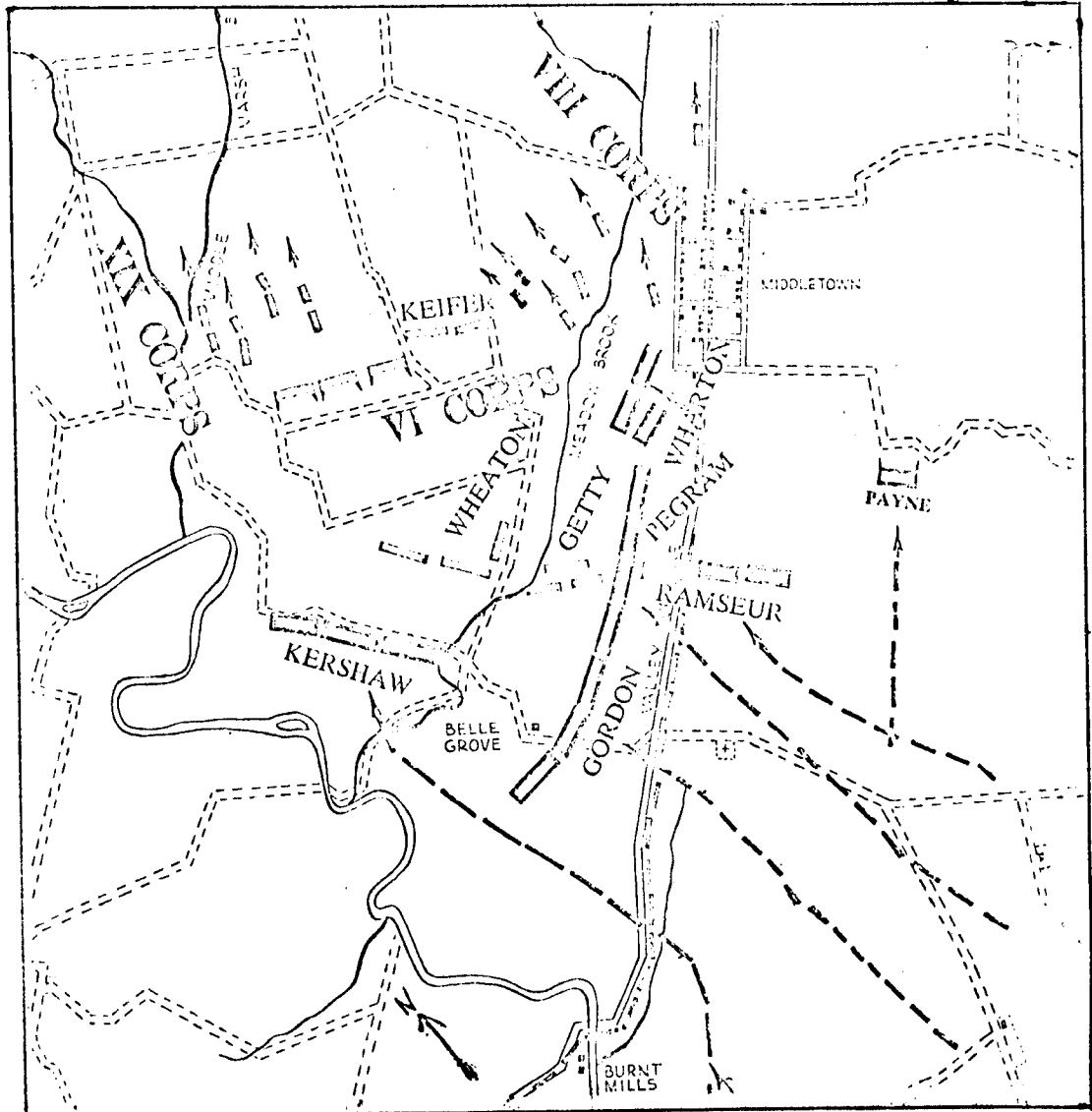


Figure 6.9. Cedar Creek, the Morning. Map adapted from Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, p. 306.

Wright's Divisions, the cavalry, and two brigades of Grover's Division, which included the 24th Iowa, finally checked the Confederate attack. According to some accounts, the Confederates became more interested in looting the deserted Union camps than in continuing the attack.³⁵

After sufficiently recovering from the shock of his wound, Major Wright again assumed command of the 24th Iowa. The major reported that soon after he returned to the regiment ammunition was procured and preparations were made to renew the battle. The 4th Brigade had taken a position on the extreme left of the XIX Corps connecting with the right of the VI Corps. General Sheridan arrived on the field, and the troops were ordered to rest and throw up some temporary works. About noon the 24th Iowa was ordered to the extreme right of the XIX Corps to protect the flank. A skirmish line was thrown out, and the regiment remained in its new position until 3 o'clock in the afternoon when the Union lines advanced.³⁶

The enemy was driven steadily from every position it had taken until the regiment's morning camp was reached. Here the 24th halted, and those who were fortunate to have any left made coffee. Some of the wounded men were found here. Everything had been taken from the camp, leaving the men and most of the officers without haversacks, blankets, or shelter tents. At 8 o'clock that evening the regiment again moved forward with the brigade to a point near Strasburg, to protect the parties that had been sent out to collect the property abandoned by the

³⁵Ibid.; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1902), p. 471.

³⁶Wright Memoranda, Report of the Battle of Cedar Creek, Va., to N. B. Baker, Adj. Gen. State of Iowa from Lieut. Col. Ed Wright, Nov. 19, 1864.

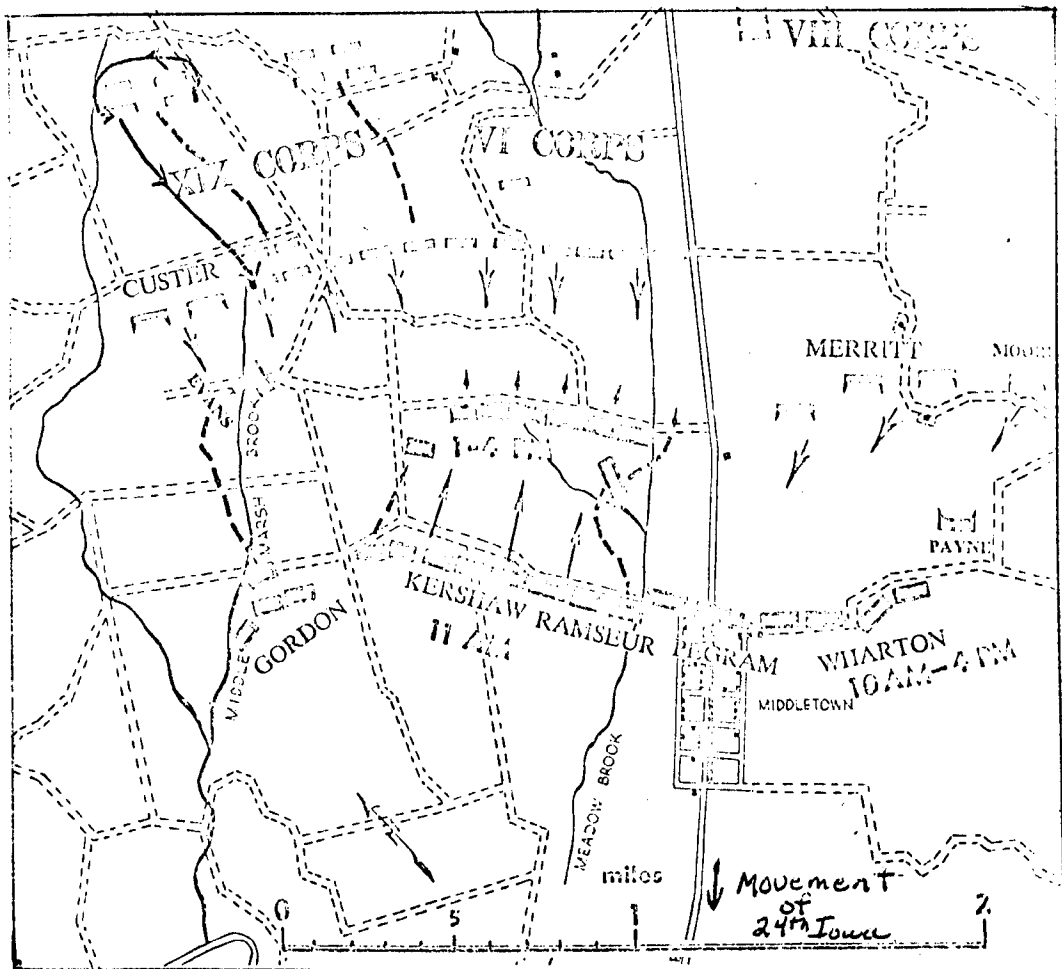


Figure 6.10. Sheridan Attacks. Map adapted from Stackpole, *Sheridan in the Shenandoah*, p. 326.

enemy in the Confederates' hasty retreat. The 24th bivouacked at Strasburg for the night without fires, and the men suffered severely for want of blankets and proper clothing to protect them from the excessive cold. The regiment had suffered seven men killed, six officers wounded, thirty-nine enlisted men wounded, two officers captured, and thirty-nine enlisted men captured for a total of ninety-three casualties.³⁷

The arrival of General Sheridan, who had been riding to the front from Winchester as soon as the morning attack was made, was undoubtedly the turning point in the contest. When Sheridan arrived, both sides seemed content with conditions as they stood. Sheridan, however, reorganized his battered army and counterattacked about 4 o'clock. His poetic arrival on his great black charger "Rienzi" was certainly overplayed by the northern press at the time and in a poem by Thomas Buchanan, but the diaries and letters of the Temperance Regiment bear out the inspirational effect of his arrival after such a bewildering morning.³⁸ Captain E. H. Pound wrote:

Our plucky 'little Phil' heard the artillery fifteen miles away and mounting his black horse ordered his staff to follow, rushed to us like the winds. His staff 'followed' too, but it was from one to five miles in 'Phil's' rear. The 'staff' rode gloriously but Sheridan was now a thunderbolt, and thunderbolts go ahead . . . After the battle of Antietam, it took the copperhead candidate for the Presidency, more than a month to reorganize his victorious army. Gen. Sheridan organized a beaten army in one hour.³⁹

Lieutenant Lucas was also impressed:

About 1 P. M. when our line was reformed at the edge of the woods and we had succeeded in stopping the enemy, General Sheridan

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Stackpole, Sheridan in the Shenandoah, pp. 319-20.

³⁹Captain E. H. Pound, "In the Field, Cedar Creek, Va., October 24, 1864," The Tipton Advertiser, Nov. 10, 1864, p. 2.

arrived on the battlefield. His black horse--Rienzi--was all white with foam . . . As soon as he got there, the program was changed. He was apparently in cool blood and with his usual appearance of good humor, he had soon disposed his troops so as to take the offensive instead of keeping on the defensive. He hurried from one end of the line to the other and was received with cheers of joy. And as he was riding in front of the lines he said that we would get back to our old camp before sundown.⁴⁰

Private Rigby also credited Sheridan with the army's turnabout:

Gen. Sheridan seemed to be infused in the ranks. Gen. Sheridan had arrived and to use his own language said, 'This work must be stopped. We must camp on our old grounds tonight.' Stockades of rails were hastily thrown up ready for the onset of the advancing foe. It was impetuous but met a fearful recoil at the hands of our brave men . . . Gen Sheridan rode along the line on his white charger speaking words of encouragement to the faint and by his presence enabling all to dare & brave all for victory.⁴¹

After the war Charles Longley still remembered Sheridan's arrival:

Short of victory this would have probably been the end of it if 'Little Phil' had not arrived. While the legend of Sheridan lives much of it this day was true--he had ridden 20 mi.--his horse did bring him towards the sounds of battle--he did rally the straglers--he did dash up and down the line, and he did order an attack at 4 P. M. . . .⁴²

Rigby vividly recounted the aftermath of the battle:

At sunset we stacked arms on our respective parade grounds. The cheers which rent the air testified of the joy of the war worn veterans who survived. Our wounded were gathered up and cared for and refreshments taken, the first since the night before, and a part of the forces pushed on to Strasburg our brigade taking the advance. On the way we met a rebel train and a number of pieces of artillery driven by their original drivers with a 'Yank' setting in front directing the frightened drivers the way to go. The ground was nearly obstructed by the abandoned paraphernalia of war. The woods was strewn with small arms & accouterments, our knapsacks and haversacks well filled with plunder. Many of the boys made good their losses. Perhaps our loss in killed and wounded exceeds the enemy's . . . Not a commanding field officer in our Division

⁴⁰Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1902), p. 470.

⁴¹Rigby Journal, Oct., 19, 1864. Rigby's observation that Sheridan's horse was white may have meant white with foam or Sheridan may have changed mounts.

⁴²Longley, Annals of Iowa (Oct., 1894), p. 559.

escaped unhurt. We captured sixty pieces of artillery including what we lost in the morning and upwards of three thousand prisoners. I believe that Gen. Early does not command a regularly organized army. Men who escaped in the confusion in the evening say that the rout exceeds the one of Winchester. This has been their final effort to retrieve their sinking fortunes prompted by the authorities at Richmond, non-combatants and a spirit of revenge provoked by our devastating march down the valley. That it singularly failed is owing to the prompt military spirit of our gallant Sheridan and the determined courage of his command. After being driven from their strong position, actually retreating then reorganizing a dispirited army and driving an exultant foe from the field, with less than one half of his army in costemation merits for Gen. Sheridan a name among the military heroes of the age. So sure was the enemy of success that many of the women from Strasburg followed the army for the purpose of pillaging. Our wounded were subject to all manner of insults from these fiends. Ambulances were fired into while passing through Middletown. The secessionist of Winchester were very exultant until news of Early's defeat reached them which caused quite a reaction in public sentiment.⁴³

Captain Knott of Company H bore the brunt of many jokes as the weary members of the 24th gathered around their campfires to make coffee. After being wounded, Knott had succeeded in escaping the Rebel onslaught by hiding in a dirty crevice on the creek bank. The Confederates often passed his hiding place but never saw him. The standard joke was that the Rebels in their hasty departure were "unable to tell which was dirt and which was Knott." Knott was indeed lucky since the prisons to which most of the regiment's captives were taken were truly equal to that suffered at by any prisoners during the war. Private George W. Palmer, a member of Company I, after his capture at Cedar Creek, was placed first in Libby Prison and later in the open enclosure known as Salisbury Prison. Palmer preferred Libby because it, at least, had a building and, located on the James River, the sanitary conditions were much better than at Salisbury. At Libby rations consisted of a piece of corn bread almost every day, but at Salisbury the prisoners

⁴³Rigby Journal, Oct. 19, 1864.

were gradually starved to death. Three small slices of corn bread and two small bowls of rice soup were served each twenty days, fifteen of which were fast days. Palmer weighed about 220 pounds when he was captured, but he weighed only 70 pounds when he was released.⁴⁴

Prisoners captured in Sheridan's Valley Campaign suffered worse treatment, it appears, than those who had fallen captive on Banks' Red River expedition. Jesse Rigby of Company B, who had been at the Battle of Sabine Cross Roads, wrote his brother Martin, also in the 24th, of prison conditions at Camp Ford, Tyler, Texas, where he was interned. Jesse reported that his diet consisted of cornmeal and beef, occasionally interspersed with the sweepings of an old Confederate mill consisting of rye scourings, dirt, and old wheat--ground up into one filthy mass and dealt out in rations of one-half pound per day. Most of Jesse's comrades had been sent to a camp forty miles below Houston, but Jesse had been out on what was called "a short French" until he was recaptured four days later. Jesse had kept the Temperance regiment's spirit alive even in prison with Bible classes in the morning, singing school in the afternoon, and prayer meetings in the evening. Jesse also related the escape of twenty-eight prisoners through a tunnel which had taken two months to dig. Most were captured the next day and returned showing the marks of being mauled by the dogs which were used to run them down. The only news from the outside came in the form of copperhead newspapers, such as the Chicago Times, New York Day Book, and the St. Louis Republican. Rigby closed his letter with a plea:

⁴⁴Swisher, Iowa in Times of War, pp. 284-85; Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, pp. 350-51.

Tell every soldier to vote for Father Abraham, for if they vote for Litle Mac, they do the very thing the rebel leaders want them to do. It is upon McClelland's election that they base all their hopes of peace and final success. We have read the best authority that can be had west of the river, and it all meets in one general focus here.⁴⁵

After three successive victories, the 24th voted November 8, 1864, overwhelmingly for the Union ticket. President Lincoln received 285 of the regiment's votes while General McClellan got only 18. The commissioner, John Mahin, of Muscatine, Iowa, challenged none who voted. While several acknowledged that they were minors and made no attempt to vote, the accepted maxim seemed to be "old enough to fight, old enough to vote."⁴⁶

During the first weeks of November the regiment served as train guards between Strasburg and Martinsburg because of guerrilla activities on the part of Colonel John S. Mosbey's irregulars. Finally relieved of the thankless task of marching ahead of the supply train, the 24th went into camp near Winchester at Camp Russel. On November 18, the regiment was shocked to learn that Colonel Wilds had died. His wound was not normally fatal, but he had refused to have his arm amputated, and fragments of the ball still lodged in his arm, apparently causing his death by blood poisoning.⁴⁷

Colonel Wilds' horse, "Old Charley," mysteriously reappeared after the Colonel's death. "Charley" had led the regiment since he had

⁴⁵J. W. Rigby, "Camp Ford, Tyler, Texas, September 29, 1864," The Tipton Advertiser, Dec. 15, 1864, p. 1.

⁴⁶Longley, Annals of Iowa (Oct., 1864), p. 564.

⁴⁷Wright Memoranda, Nov., 1864; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1902), pp. 476, 482.

been jayhawked on the Vicksburg Campaign. Although one of three wounds received by "Charley" had paralyzed his "fly-disturber," he was still a prize riding horse. Lieutenant Colonel Wright maintained the marching tradition of the 24th by purchasing Charley to replace his own mount which had been shot.⁴⁸

The men quickly constructed comfortable log huts in their new winter camp. The regiment was, however, sadly disappointed in their Thanksgiving feast because they had seen stories in the New York and Baltimore papers of the great turkey and chicken dinners that would be given to the soldiers in the Valley and on the James. Rigby described the ration for the eight in his mess as "a small chicken with blood shot exterior, and the grist mill of a turkey." In December the regiment moved their bivouac to another location at Camp Russell; this time a number of the members, assured that their new camp would be permanent until spring, improved their shanties by adding brick walls. January 1, 1865, brought good tidings to a few members of the 24th; furloughs for four officers and 5 per cent of the enlisted men present were approved by General Sheridan. On January 4, the nineteen lucky men boarded the train bound for Iowa.⁴⁹

On January 6 the remainder of the regiment also boarded a train, bound for unknown destination. The troops had been thoroughly chilled by standing four hours in a freezing rain while the train was loaded. Dripping wet, the entire brigade of the 24th was crowded aboard the

⁴⁸Smith, Annals of Iowa (April, 1893), p. 32; Longley, Annals of Iowa (Oct., 1894), pp. 562-63.

⁴⁹The Tipton Advertiser, Dec. 14, 1864, p. 1; Rigby Journal, Nov. 24, 1864; Longley, Annals of Iowa (Oct., 1894), p. 565; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1902), pp. 491-92.

train cars. The fortunate were packed into the boxcars, but many had to suffer the elements in open flatcars or atop the boxcars. The regiment disembarked at Camp Carroll near Baltimore, Maryland. The troops were quartered in a stable which they claimed had just been evacuated by horses because it only had a roof. Camp guards were posted, but peddler women soon swarmed along the guard line. Rigby reported, "some of the western outlaws had the audacity to run by the guard and got to town." The Iowans stole some of "Uncle Sam's hay to make beds," and throwing their tents over the horse stall, Rigby's mess mates set up a small portable stove and slept comfortably.⁵⁰ A fight developed during the night between some western and eastern regiments in which side arms, guns, and brickbats were used freely. Rigby reported that several men were wounded though not seriously, and the 24th had not been involved. The temperate private reported the eastern regiments were generally drunk and riotous, but not so with the 24th. A commotion was raised when a sutler set up in camp, while the women peddlers were kept beyond the guards. An unsuccessful attempt was made to drive the sutler out by the temperance regiment's eastern neighbors.⁵¹

On January 13 the regiment finally boarded the ocean steamer Suwo-Nada. The men approved the comfortable bunks of the ship as compared with the hay in the stable, and on the 14th a pleasant trip was made to Fortress Monroe. Taking on fifteen days' rations, the Suwo-Nada moved out to sea taking the 24th Iowa on to yet another undisclosed destination.⁵²

⁵⁰Rigby Journal, Jan. 6, 7, and 8, 1865.

⁵¹Ibid., Jan. 7, 8, 9, and 10, 1865.

⁵²Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1902), p. 495.

The regiment had spent a glorious fall campaigning in the Valley with Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah. The campaign must have sparked memories of Vicksburg with its excellent jayhawking, victorious fighting, and complete confidence in their commander. As at Vicksburg, the cost of success had been excessive. On August 31, 1864, the 24th Iowa had numbered 668 enlisted men and 29 commissioned officers. After the Battle of Cedar Creek, only 9 officers and 238 enlisted men were present for duty. The regiment had lost their respected commander, Colonel Wilds, as well as most of the Company captains who had led the 24th at Vicksburg. Though destined to serve their full three year enlistment, the veterans of the 24th Iowa had completed service as a combat regiment.⁵³

⁵³Longley, Annals of Iowa (Oct., 1894), pp. 446, 553, 561.

Chapter 7

REAR GUARD TO SHERMAN'S ARMY

Flames lighted up the sky, and exploding shells shook the campsite. Shell fragments went hissing and screaming through the air following each deafening concussion. Surprisingly, the 24th Iowa was not under any type of enemy attack. The explosions were coming from a burning ammunition warehouse near where the 24th was camped, near the center of Savannah, Georgia. The regiment had arrived in Savannah on January 20, 1865, after another miserable ocean voyage, from Fortress Monroe, Virginia.¹

The 24th Iowa's division commander, General Grover, had opened the sealed orders after the steamer Suwo-Nada had left the Virginia coast. The general stated that the division's destination was Savannah, Georgia, and that he was going to have as "soft a thing" as he wanted for his division. Elements of the XIX Corps were being sent to Savannah in January, 1865, to relieve the troops of the XX Corps which had been garrisoning the city. General Sherman wanted the XX Corps to join his army because he was planning a campaign through the Carolinas as soon as the weather improved. The 24th Iowa, which had been assigned to the 3rd Brigade, Grover's Division, District of Savannah, Department

¹Rigby Journal, Jan. 28, 1865.

of the South, looked forward to easy guard duty after they relieved the XX Corps.²

The trip to Savannah was one of the 24th Iowa's most miserable experiences. The departure from Fortress Monroe had gone pleasantly the first day. But by January 16, the seas were very rough, and the Suwo-Nada often had her decks awash with breaking waves. Private Rigby, after depositing his breakfast over the rail, reported that there was no poetry in sea sickness. The temperate private was also put off by the actions of a lieutenant of the 159th New York, who had taken too much of the "Old Joyful." Though the officer's antics were laughable, the whole affair was disgusting in Rigby's opinion.³

Arriving in Savannah, the regiment was given temporary quarters at a train depot near the center of town. While they camped there a warehouse of ammunition had caught fire only a few blocks away. Private Rigby described the scene:

Panic stricken women, children and negroes were hurrying frantically from the missiles of death. Although the fragments were falling all about our quarters a number of women took refuge in them and felt themselves safe. I suppose for the reason that we took the shelling too coolly.⁴

The regiment, after most of the shells had ignited, aided in fighting the resulting fires, despite the danger of further explosions. Savannah presented a sad picture the next morning. Six blocks had burned before the fire could be controlled. The city, with its wide oak shaded

²Hicken, Illinois in the Civil War, p. 290; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (April, 1902), pp. 495-96; Dyer, Compendium of the War, Vol. III, p. 1174.

³Rigby Journal, Jan. 17 and 25, 1865.

⁴Ibid., Jan. 28, 1865.

streets, beautiful homes, and impressive public buildings, boasted of a theater, three academies, thirteen churches, and eighteen lovely parks, all of which had impressed the Iowans.⁵

Arriving in Savannah, the troops found that the prices were very high, and many prominent citizens were receiving rations from the army. Some were shocked to find ladies dressed in silk, engaged in the humble occupation of rag picker. Rigby showed little Christian charity as he recorded, ". . . the sad expression of countenance betray all the effects of a wicked cause . . . well may the matron and fair maidens of this land sit in ashes and drape their ulcerated hearts." Private Rigby accompanied Captain James Martin to visit a sick woman whose husband was in the Confederate army and whose family was living upon the hospitality of "Uncle Sam." Again Rigby bitterly penned, "While the husband is fighting to sustain barbarism, Union officers and soldiers are praying for the salvation of his household."⁶

Lucas, who had just received his commission as Captain of Company D, proved more charitable, saying that many southerners had come back to good Union sentiments, either from good will or by force of circumstances. The captain felt that General Sherman's policy of caring for those who were in need was justified even if it included the wives and families of Confederate generals. Lucas was much more concerned about the price of an officer's dress coat. The new captain felt rather shoddy in his old coat, but a new one would cost about fifty dollars. By replacing

⁵Ibid., Jan. 26 and 28, 1865.

⁶Ibid., Jan. 29 and Feb. 13, 1865.

the buttons on his Belgian Army uniform, he was sure he could improve his appearance and save some money. Although the Belgian coat was of a greenish-blue color, it was shorter and more stylish than those issued to Union officers. A letter was, therefore, sent to Iowa asking that the coat be forwarded.⁷

Sergeant Hoag was upset with the sermons given by the minister of the Independent Presbyterian Church. The man was a good speaker and preached orthodox doctrine, but he did not pray for the Union. Rigby was also displeased, saying that the prayers were so carefully worded that the subject of patriotism was left very ambiguous. Both soldiers preferred Reverend M. French, Union Army Chaplain, who delivered a splendid sermon on the state of the country and on the "African race."⁸

Everyone, however, seemed to enjoy the promenade concert at Forsyth Square. A brass band played to General Grover and his staff. Most of the aristocracy of Savannah also attended along with many fair maidens. But the maidens were not very sociable. Even Rigby, who returned to camp early for a good supper which was of more interest to him than "rebel women," enjoyed the good music.⁹

The big social event was Washington's Birthday. Here was an occasion both Confederates and Federals could honor, and the church bells rang from noon until one o'clock. Southern belles were well represented, both at the park concerts and at the public establishments. Captain Lucas was delighted that the ladies had recovered from their

⁷Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), pp. 517-18.

⁸Hoag Diary, Feb. 19, 1865; Rigby Journal, Feb. 19, 1865.

⁹Hoag Diary, Feb. 11, 1865; Rigby Journal, Feb. 11, 1865.

apparent fear of Yankees and were now moving about openly. Rigby acknowledged that several balls and dancing parties had been gotten up for the evening if anyone cared for such a demonstration. Sergeant Hoag, the color bearer of the 24th, was one who cared for such entertainment. He received a free ticket to the Military Ball at St. Andrews Hall for bringing the regimental colors to decorate the auditorium. The sergeant affirmed that he had a very good time, not leaving until one o'clock in the morning with a headache.¹⁰

During February the men who had been granted furloughs returned to the regiment. Captain Lucas was upset at the big bounties being paid to induce men to volunteer. Lucas felt that a better solution would be for the federal government to increase the pay of the soldiers in the field. Big bounties only encouraged men to desert after they received their bonus, change their names, and to enroll again. Somewhat cynically, the captain professed that he was glad Iowa was exempt from the draft. "Those who were trembling from fear of having to do something for the country which protects them may now rest easy."¹¹

The guard duties at Savannah were light. Negroes, hired by the government for ten dollars per month plus one ration per day, did most of the physical labor. The men only had to stand duty every other day, and they were comfortable in newly issued "tent barracks." Lucas' company was issued ten of these tents, 12 feet by 7 1/2 feet each. With only thirty-eight men in the company and three or four men assigned to each tent, there was plenty of room. Lucas and his second lieutenant

¹⁰Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), pp. 516, 519; Rigby Journal, Feb. 22, 1865; Hoag Diary, Feb. 22, 1865.

¹¹Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), p. 519.

combined three of the tents. One tent was used as a bedroom, another for an office, and the third served as housing for Joe, their servant and cook. Lucas depicted Joe as "a young and intelligent mulatto who can speak, read and write English and French, and whose parents live in New Orleans, La., where he joined us."¹²

On March 4, the regiment gave up the easy life and with the 176th New York boarded the coastal steamer, Delaware. The remainder of the brigade was to follow in a day or two. During the voyage to Morehead City, North Carolina, both regiments were nearly lost at sea. The Delaware was built with an overhang like a river ferry and was in very poor repair. Encountering heavy seas off Cape Fear, the ship nearly foundered. Water poured into the lower decks where most of the regiment was quartered. A serious leak developed, and the pumps were kept constantly going. The 24th held what many felt would be their last prayer meeting, and one man crawled up and embraced the anchor for safety. Fortunately a protected inlet was reached before the pumps failed.¹³

General Sherman, in his successful move through the Carolinas, had shifted his supply base to Morehead City. The 24th Iowa was detailed to guard and unload ships at the new supply base. For a month the regiment toiled to keep supplies flowing to Sherman's army of 80,000 men. The work was exhausting, but the sandy beaches provided a diversion on days off. There were plenty of fresh oysters to eat, and although the sand at times blew and drifted like snow in Iowa, it provided a

¹²Ibid., pp. 515, 517.

¹³Ibid., pp. 520-23; Longley, Annals of Iowa (April, 1895), p. 48-49.

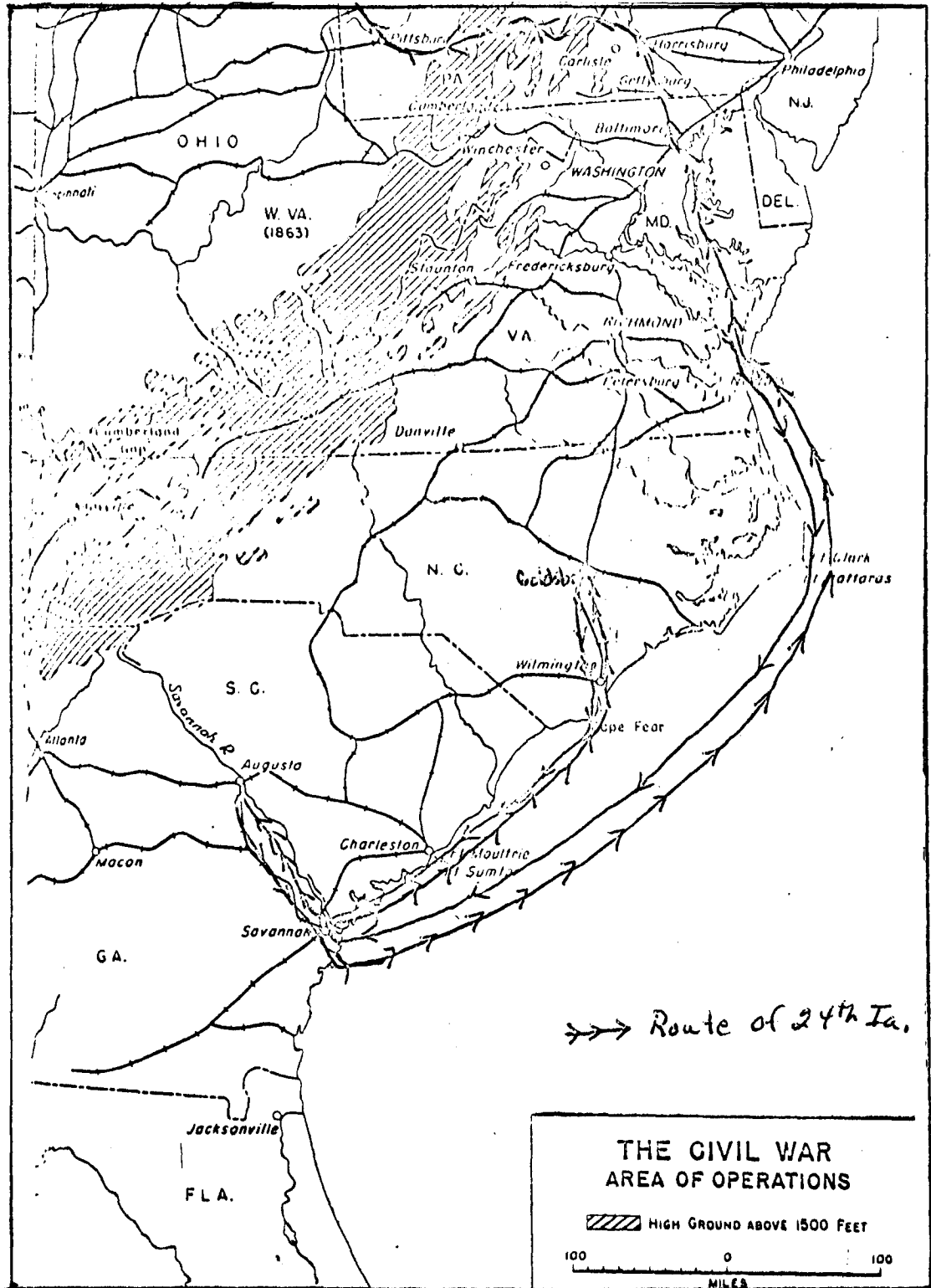


Figure 7.1. Movement of the 24th Iowa, 1865. Map adapted from Matloff, *American Military History*, p. 186.

comfortable bed to sleep on. Although an occasional game of baseball was played, most of the regiment became beach combers, looking for shells. Captain Lucas shipped a large valise of his favorite finds back to his brother in Iowa. On April 6, there was a huge celebration in honor of Lee's evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond. Rigby, as usual, was put out at the number of drunk men he had to escort to the guard house.¹⁴

The regiment was transported by rail to Goldsboro, North Carolina, arriving on April 10 as the last of Sherman's army was marching out. Although the regiment had been reassigned to the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division of the X Army Corps, the men were disappointed to learn that the 24th would not join in Sherman's advance. They would, instead, garrison the city of Goldsboro. Occupying an excellent campsite left by Sherman's advancing army, the 24th benefitted from many items left behind. Rigby's mess secured a large hospital "fly" tent, well furnished with bunks, tables, and chairs. A cooking apartment was attached, complete with a box cupboard. Private Rigby was thrilled to find also a copy of Finley's Western Methodism and Dr. Cutter's Revised Physiology.¹⁵

Goldsboro was an important railroad junction and contained a women's seminary. The citizens were far from hospitable, and Rigby proclaimed:

We would suppose, at least some refinement among the fair sex from the fine edifice erected for their culture. But on an average they are a fair specimen of clay eating, snuff suckers. Their

¹⁴Hoag Diary, March 18, 23, and 24, 1865; Rigby Journal, April 5, and 7, 1865; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), pp. 552, 524, 526-27.

¹⁵Longley, Annals of Iowa (April, 1895), p. 50; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), p. 530; Rigby Journal, April 10, 1865.

seminary is now devoted to the use of our sick and wounded while its former inmates have gone out to bless the world by encouraging treason, and making clothing for traitors.¹⁶

The festive mood created by General Lee's surrender to General Grant was dampened on April 18 by confirmation of the assassination of President Lincoln. Captain Lucas conveyed the feelings of many:

The assassination of President Lincoln has certainly touched the heart of every patriot, and has cast a gloom over all the country, but let us hope the guilty ones, if found, will be dealt with as they deserve. But in our sorrow, we can rejoice in the fact that the resources of this country are inexhaustible. Statesmen and Generals are not wanting. The loss of even of the best man, does not keep the great National machine from moving just as if nothing had happened.¹⁷

Private Rigby took a more radical view of the situation. He professed:

A spirit of indignation sences my breast. I was led to ask am I so attached to a man that I forget that God overrules our destinies and can cause the wrath of man to praise Him? Perhaps the President would have adapted a too concileatory administration towards the rebels. It may be all for the good. God knows best.¹⁸

On the evening of April 19, the regiment was informed at dress parade that General Johnston had surrendered to General Sherman and that the agreement needed only the new president's approval. Sherman's special order to his troops stated, "The General commanding announces to the army a suspension of hostilities and an agreement with General Johnston and other high officials, which when formally ratified, will make peace from the Potomac to the Rio Grande." The men were exuberant

¹⁶Rigby Journal, April 10, 1865.

¹⁷Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), p. 534, 540; Rigby Journal, April 18, 1865.

¹⁸Rigby Journal, April 18, 1865.

that the war was finally over, and Lucas predicted that the regiment would be back in Iowa to celebrate the 4th of July.¹⁹

Sherman's proposed agreement did not provoke the same enthusiasm with Washington officials as it had with the army. President Johnson and his cabinet ministers were in no mood for a document that proposed reconciliation and an easy peace. Coming only two days after Lincoln's funeral, only a proposal that contained the same unconditional surrender terms which Grant had given Lee would have been accepted. Secretary of War Stanton earned Sherman's undying hatred by publicly renouncing Sherman's proposal as little short of treason. The matter, however, was officially resolved by Johnson's acceptance on April 26, 1865, of a surrender paper that duplicated the one Grant had signed with Lee. The conflicting orders of peace, then war, then peace, left the 24th Iowa very skeptical of any further announcements. Hoag wrote, "report in this evening that Johnston has surrendered, we don't believe it." There was no celebration therefore of Johnston's surrender as there had been when Lee had.²⁰

On April 29, Company B was detailed as an honor guard to escort General Sherman's train on a flying trip to Wilmington. The regiment had not been paid for eight months, and Captain Rigby did not even have enough money to purchase a paper collar for his dress uniform. Borrowing the only one in the command from Sergeant Lyons and carefully splitting it in two, the Captain was able to make his toilet both going

¹⁹Hoag Diary, April 19, 1865; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), pp. 531-32.

²⁰Catton, Grant Takes Command, pp. 480-87; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), pp. 533-34; Hoag Diary, April 26, 1865.

and coming. On the return trip the honor guard unceremoniously beat up a Confederate captain who insulted them.²¹

The regiment returned to Morehead City and took a ship back to Savannah on May 1. General Terry, the X Corps commander, ordered Colonel Wright to issue new forage caps to the regiment. Three companies refused to wear the caps, and a fourth company burned theirs. The "skull caps" were finally returned to the quartermaster, and the men felt smug about not having to wear such a "worthless appendage." The following day the 24th began marching inland to Augusta, Georgia. Seven regiments--22nd, 24th, and 28th Iowa, 13th Connecticut, 128th, 131st, and 159th New York--made the 135 mile march.²²

Private Rigby gave a very detailed account of the long march through the unreconstructed region of the South. The first part of the march to Sisters Ferry was through land so poor that it would have produced only ten to twelve bushels of corn or wheat per acre. Sherman's army had destroyed this region, and women, claiming that they had not eaten in forty-eight hours, even begged hardtack from the marchers. The returning Confederate soldiers from Johnston's army presented a pathetic picture. Officers rode on skeletons which once had been horses. From the three star general to the lowly "clay eater," all were going home without public demonstration or cheers of joy to welcome them. Rigby symbolized them as "beating the death march of their dead Confederacy."²³

²¹Ibid., April 24, 1865; Longley, Annals of Iowa (April, 1895), p. 50.

²²Rigby Journal, May 10, 1865, p. 51; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), p. 537.

²³Rigby Journal, May 20, 1865.

Chivalry was further wounded as the Union marchers flaunted their banners and played their marching music. In Waynesboro, the band struck up "Bonnie Blue Flag," and a Confederate captain, still in full uniform, resenting the insult, walked into his home and slammed the door. A young lady companion tossed her pretty head in contempt of the passing column. Many, however, who viewed the marchers were openly friendly and acknowledged that they had been beaten fairly and were ready to return to peaceful pursuits. A few, like the insulted captain, retorted, "You have not whipped us, you have only overpowered us." One old southern gentleman added that, "We are ready to fight you again." His two sons recently returned from Lee's army were of the opinion that the old man could do the next fighting; they had had enough.²⁴

Between Waynesboro and Augusta the land improved in quality, and a number of fine mansions were sighted. Lucas noted several men working in grey uniforms and a number of southern belles, all very white, showing that they had not been exposed to the sun. Most of the plantation owners still retained their slaves. The Negroes, in most cases, were not yet aware of their freedom. A few, however, followed the marching column.²⁵

One former owner attempted to take a Negro from the column with the permission of Colonel Wright. When the plantation owner drew a revolver to intimidate the fugitive, the 24th acted, relieving the man of his revolvers, money, and claim to the Negro. Another person

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), p. 538.

in grey uniform followed the regiment all the way to Augusta to get a woman who had escaped his cruelty. Rigby criticized the officers for allowing this man to ride in the rear of the column while they argued the doctrine of civil rights, a doctrine that was dead and damned in the private's opinion. Rigby felt it was better for the masses of Negroes to remain at their homes where they received comparatively good treatment until the government could provide proper protection. The soldiers, however, had a duty not to close their eyes to the demands of humanity.²⁶

Approaching Augusta the column was hurraed by a group of Negroes. The cheerers were rebuked by a southern woman who screamed in a piping keg, "You damned niggers, I wish some of these men would shoot you." Rigby thought that the question of which was preferable, a black skin or a black heart, was hardly debatable. The three Iowa regiments which had outdistanced their eastern comrades at arms, paraded with colors flying and drums beating through Augusta. The troops then crossed the Savannah River and camped one mile northeast of the city in the little hamlet of Hamburg, South Carolina.²⁷

The relations between the local populace and the Union regiments were not improved when the 24th went as a group to the St. James Methodist Episcopal Church. Arriving shortly after Sunday School had begun, they surprised the congregation. Rigby was led to believe that they were not welcome.²⁸ The Christian private revealed:

²⁶Rigby Journal, April 20, 1865.

²⁷Ibid.; Hoag Diary, May 20, 1865; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), p. 538.

²⁸Rigby Journal, May 21, 1865; Hoag Diary, May 21, 1865.

A class of little boys sitting near desired me to teach them. We talked about their lesson and soon were on good terms. At the close of S. S. they bade me goodby and raised their little mouths for a kiss. Sweet cherabs, too young to be tainted by the cesspool of rebellion and sin in which they are unfortunately placed. The people manifested the same spirit in church which bordered upon disrespect for the house of God if not ill manners. The Blue Coats all conformed to the regulation of the church like men accustomed to assemble in the house of God. Such conduct will break down the prejudice against us sooner than anything else. The minister a very unclerical looking man dressed in rebel gray preached from II Timothy 2: 2. His manner was affected, language ambiguous and lengthened his discourse by repetitions. He stated that owing to existing circumstances further appointments would be withdrawn for the present. I construed 'Existing circumstances' to mean 'We are not prepared to worship with Blue Coats.'²⁹

The following day some members of the 28th Iowa killed twenty-one bloodhounds owned by Judge William Butler, who reportedly had frequently used them to catch fugitive Union soldiers escaping from prison as well as runaway slaves. Butler had taken the oath of allegiance, and the attack on his kennel brought an order restricting all regiments to camp. Rigby charged that the judge had become a drinking partner of the leading officers, and a few of the boys had a better idea of justice that respect for high Confederate officials or a few southern mongrel curs.³⁰

With the war obviously over, the regiment found it strange that they had to continue with daily battalion or company drill and dress parade every evening. False hopes were raised when orders to march were issued. Instead of a return to Savannah, the regiment was marched to an old United States arsenal three miles southwest of Augusta. Once again, the Iowans put on a show as they marched through town. Large

²⁹Rigby Journal, May 21, 1865.

³⁰Ibid., May 28, 1865; Hoag Diary, May 22, 1865; Longley, Annals of Iowa (April, 1895), p. 51.

brick buildings provided comfortable quarters for both officers and men. The arsenal had manufactured ammunition and supplies for the Confederate Army during the war. A number of shell fuses and signal rockets provided the regiment with a beautiful evening of fireworks until a misdirected signal rocket killed a member of the 28th Iowa, ending the festivities.³¹

The brigade's medical inspector was disappointed in his attempt to check the men and their quarters. Most members of the regiment slipped off to town, and those who remained demanded he inspect their rations of rotten cod fish and meat first. Private Rigby was further upset that his company had to share their quarters with the "card playing community," whose gambling often went on until midnight.³²

Most of the men were anxious to return home to Iowa. Lucas informed his brother:

You wish me to give you my opinion as to what part of the country I would prefer of all those through which I traveled during the war. I will say 'Iowa,' because, although the winters are generally long and severe, it is healthful. It is only after having spent some time in the field and in a country where it hardly ever freezes hard enough to purify the atmosphere that a man can appreciate the healthful climate of Iowa. I think that any Belgian of ordinary constitution should not go to live south of Saint Louis, or at least not south of the 38th degree of latitude.³³

Lucas went on to express his dissatisfaction of Secretary of War Stanton's treatment of General Sherman. Judging from the newspaper reports, the captain felt that the break between the two over the liberal surrender terms of General Johnston's army was Stanton's fault.

³¹Rigby Journal, May 31, 1865; Hoag Diary, May 31, 1865; Longley, Annals of Iowa (April, 1895), p. 51.

³²Hoag Diary, June 10, 1865; Rigby Journal, June 10, 1865.

³³Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), p. 540.

If the proposed terms had been accepted by Washington, Lucas felt, it would have done much to restore friendly feelings between the sections. In Lucas' opinion, the war had produced three great military generals, Sheridan, Sherman, and Grant. The Belgian was certain Grant would now make a better Secretary of War than Stanton.³⁴

The more radical republican elements of the 24th were delighted to learn that the 33rd U. S. Colored Infantry regiment was relieving them. Even Lucas was impressed with their military bearing when they arrived on June 15. Originally organized by General Hunter, they were the first Negro regiment accepted from South Carolina. Rigby delighted in the fact that the arrival of the 33rd had produced a sensation among the whites which bordered on the ridiculous. While the white population cursed, the black population gathered to watch their brothers in blue drill under the command of their white officers. The regiment's flag was appropriately inscribed "The Year of Jubilee has come."³⁵

Knowing that as soon as Savannah was reached the regiment could be mustered out, the 24th pushed hard on the return march, arriving on June 25. The 135 miles had been covered in six days, averaging over 20 miles per day. The enlisted men spent most of their time lounging around while the officers completed the muster out rolls. Five copies of the Muster Out Rolls and two copies of the Pay Rolls had to be completed.³⁶ July 4 produced little excitement. Some of the soldiers who had been allowed to purchase their guns for six dollars kept up a loud

³⁴Ibid., pp. 542-43.

³⁵Ibid., p. 545; Rigby Journal, June 15, 1865; Hoag Diary, June 18, 1865.

³⁶Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), pp. 546, 548.

racket of musket shot into the air. There were several rows between Negroes and soldiers in town to help break the monotony. Captain Pound read the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation at dress parade, but thoughts were more on Iowa than on the country's birthday.³⁷

Since they were without money, the impatience over red tape became almost unbearable. Finally on July 17, 1865, the 24th Iowa officially ceased to exist as part of the United States Army. The last casualty had been an unfortunate corporal in Company B, struck by lightning the day before while he slept. On July 19, Companies B, E, G, and K, under command of Major Leander Clark, boarded the steamer Detroit bound for Baltimore, Maryland. Colonel Wright embarked the following day with the remaining companies of the regiment, also for Baltimore.³⁸

Wright's wing of the regiment arrived in Baltimore first, and after a meal at the Soldiers' Home took a freight train to Pittsburg. Although they arrived in the middle of the night, the Iowans were greeted by a committee of citizens and given a banquet at City Hall. Arriving at Chicago late the next night, the companies forwent supper and commandeered a train waiting for the 22nd Iowa. They arrived in Davenport about nine o'clock the next morning, having had nothing to eat. They were then drawn up to listen to welcoming speeches by three prominent citizens, and they were thankful that Colonel Wright made his

³⁷Hoag Diary, July 4, 1865; Rigby Journal, July 4, 1865.

³⁸Longley, Annals of Iowa (April, 1895), pp. 54-55.

response very brief, allowing them to finally satisfy their hunger.³⁹

The left wing of the regiment arrived the next day on July 27. Their ocean steamer had been much slower in its voyage to Baltimore. Rigby reported fair ladies waving flags greeted the soldiers' train at every farm and hamlet. In high spirits, Rigby pictured the trip across the Alleghenies as romantic, passing through dark tunnels and lofty cliffs of deep ravines. The ride across Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois was pleasant, but Camp McClellan, Davenport, Iowa, was the most beautiful sight.⁴⁰

Relatives and friends began arriving to greet the returned veterans. The men finally received their back pay on August 2, and the 24th Iowa was officially disbanded. Although the parting was one of melancholy, the return to their individual homes was not joyous for all. Captain Lucas was sobered by the news that his mother had died June 13, tearfully clutching his picture and saying that she would never see her Alexander.⁴¹

Rigby's homecoming was more joyous. Cousins greeted him along the route with hugs and handshakes. His father met him on the road, and everyone seemed glad to see him, whether they knew him or not. True to his convictions, the Christian stalwart of the Temperance Regiment gathered with his loved ones around the family altar and returned thanks that God's mercy had preserved them through a trying three years. Rigby

³⁹Ibid., pp. 55-56; Hoag Diary, July 19-26, 1865.

⁴⁰Rigby Journal, July 19-27, 1865.

⁴¹Longley, Annals of Iowa (April, 1895), p. 56; Hoag Diary, Aug. 2, 1865; Lucas, Iowa Historical Record (July, 1902), p. 551. The disbanding of the 24th was a state act as opposed to their Federal discharge in Savannah.

closed his diary by writing:

Father and Mother look older, and Ida is a large girl now. Grandmother is fast expiring for the tomb. Surely time is making his ravages, and is a guest where he is least wanted. I am at home again, a place to rest.⁴²

⁴²Rigby Journal, Aug. 3, 1865.

Chapter 8

EPILOGUE

The surviving members of the Twenty-fourth Regiment of Iowa Volunteer Infantry assembled in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on December 17, 1865. Twenty years had passed since the Temperance Regiment had been mustered out of service. Nostalgia enveloped the proceedings as the veterans gathered in front of a large oil portrait, draped with the tattered and worn battle flag of the regiment, of Colonel John Q. Wilds. Ed Wright was the guest of honor. Wright had been breveted brigadier general prior to the mustering out, and the distinguished officer had continued his career of public service in civilian life. General Wright had been elected to the Iowa State General Assembly, where he was chosen Speaker of the House. He had also been elected Secretary of State and appointed assistant superintendent of construction of the new State House. Although every company was represented at the evening roll call, fewer than 200 members were present. The aging survivors told a glowing story of their three years of service. Not until three o'clock in the morning was the glorious record of the old 24th completely recounted. While the reminiscences suffered from the clouded memories of veterans proud of difficult service, the historic record of the fighting regiment needed no embellishment.¹

¹William T. Rigby, compiler, "Proceedings and Roster of the

The soldiers who had served in the 24th Iowa, in many respects, mirrored the image of most Iowa soldiers in the Civil War. The recruits were small farmers or mechanics, merchants, lawyers, students, and teachers who lived in Iowa's small rural villages. The average age of the regiment was 25 years. This average is nearly a year younger than the one Wiley gives for 1862 in Life of Billy Yank. The large number of Cornell College students who enlisted in Company B accounts for part of the youthful average. The youngest member of the regiment was Colonel Byam's son, Commodore Perry Byam, who was listed on the muster roll as being twelve. As with many Civil War drummer boys, Commodore became a legendary figure to the regiment, and a Des Moines Tribune article of his death in February, 1922, reported he was the youngest drummer boy to serve in the Civil War. If Commodore was indeed sixty-nine when he died in 1922, he would have been only nine years old when he enlisted in the 24th Iowa. As Wiley pointed out, however, the claim to "Youngest Yank" would be impossible to establish. Young Byam was discharged for disability on July 26, 1863, at Vicksburg, Mississippi. The date corresponded with the similar discharge of his father and older brother Charles, the regiment's adjutant, though only eighteen. Colonel Byam's third son, William, enlisted at seventeen as a drummer in Company G and served until he was mustered out on July 17, 1865, in Savannah, Georgia.²

Second Reunion of the Twenty-fourth Iowa Volunteers, held at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Thursday, December 17th, 1885" (printed by Chas. L. Longley at Tipton, Iowa, 1886), pp. 1-33.

²Roster and Record, Vol. III, p. 795-899; Wiley, Life of Billy Yank, pp. 296-303.

The honor of being the oldest recruit was jointly shared by Dr. John M. Witherwax and First Lieutenant Thomas Green. Both men were fifty-one when they enlisted, and both resigned for disability. Green resigned during the Vicksburg Campaign, and Witherwax resigned while the regiment was serving in the Shenandoah Valley. Fifty-four men who enlisted in the Temperance Regiment were between forty and forty-five years old. The number whose age fell in the thirty's range totalled 244. Volunteers between twenty and twenty-nine comprised the largest number, totalling 607. Teenagers enlisting numbered 296. Mirroring Wiley's figures, the eighteen-year-olds were the largest age group, numbering 168; twenty-one-year-olds followed with a total of 112.³

Despite its youthful statistics, the regiment had many men leave wives and children to enlist, and several fathers served together with their sons. Over eighty per cent of the regiment listed their nativity as Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, or one of the New England states, reflecting the recent pattern of settlement in Iowa. Scotland, Germany, Ireland, England, and Canada accounted for most of the foreign-born in the regiment. However, Switzerland, Belgium, Nova Scotia, Bohemia, Norway, and South Wales were also listed.⁴

Most of the men of the 24th had not been caught up in the first emotional appeal for troops. Some experienced veterans did, however, join the regiment. Appointed Lieutenant Colonel, John Q. Wilds, a former captain in the 13th Iowa, had been wounded at the Battle of Shiloh. Colonel Byam's son Charles, the regiment's adjutant, had had his leg

³Ibid.

⁴Roster and Record, Vol. III, p. 795-899.

shattered while serving with the 6th Iowa. Private Ezra Webb had seen service with the 11th Iowa in Missouri, and he had been discharged for disability after the Battle of Shiloh. When these battle-tested veterans joined the 24th, they no longer held a romantic view of warfare.⁵

The president's call for troops in the summer of 1862 came in the face of Union defeats and with no prospect of a quick conclusion to the fighting. Inspired by a sincere belief that they were needed to preserve the Union, the volunteers were recruited more by appeals to duty than to emotion. Even monetary inducement of a forty dollar bounty was of secondary importance to most of those enlisting because nearby counties were paying volunteers seventy-five dollars. Many of the recruits were sympathetic toward Negro emancipation, but most who enlisted were more Unionist than abolitionist. The appeal to duty came not from a public official, but from a spiritual leader.

Although many Civil War regiments were religiously inspired, the 24th Iowa was the only known Methodist "Temperance Regiment." The unit's organizer, Reverend Eber Byam, was a respected temperance worker in east-central Iowa. He was probably correct in his claim that the regiment's temperance ideals caused many to volunteer who would not have otherwise. The popularity of a Temperance Regiment was evidenced by the fact that more than twice the number of companies sought acceptance than were needed. With the aid of Governor Kirkwood, Colonel Byam selected ten companies which they felt represented the Methodist ideals of temperance. The selection was done apparently more on the basis of company commanders than on any real scrutiny of individual recruits. Governor

⁵Ibid.

Kirkwood was apparently thwarted in his attempt to organize a second temperance regiment from the companies that Byam had rejected. Secretary of War Stanton, in correspondence with the governor in the Official Records, stated that a new temperance regiment would not be entitled to the federal bounty unless all the other regiments were full and replacements had been recruited for those Iowa regiments already in the field. To avoid the humiliation of a draft for replacements and to insure the companies that had already been raised received their bounty, Kirkwood apparently divided these companies among the regiments still forming which lacked a full roster of ten companies.

Of the ten companies accepted by Byam, five were captained by Methodist ministers, and two were headed by ministers' sons. Unlike Byam who was absent much of the time and who faltered under fire in the Vicksburg Campaign, these men of the cloth proved able field officers and were revered by the men who served under them. Of the original company commanders, only two survived to be mustered out at Savannah. Captain Leander Clark had attained the rank of lieutenant colonel, and Captain James Martin was acting as major. Both officers had been ministers prior to joining the regiment. Twenty-three officers resigned from the 24th Iowa. Most resignations were due to illness; however, Captain Henderson resigned to accept a position of lieutenant colonel in the 44th Iowa after the Battle of Vicksburg. Nine officers were killed in the line of duty and died of wounds; three died of disease. Five officers were captured. Although the change in commanders was substantial, such transition was not uncommon, especially among regiments that saw as much action as did the 24th Iowa.

The temperance rules forbidding drinking of any alcoholic

beverages were strictly enforced by Colonel Byam. Temperance centered around the prohibition of all intoxicating liquors to insure an atmosphere of good moral character in the regiment. Drunkards were often bucked and gagged, and even card players suffered fines, extra duty, and demotion. Byam's resignation tempered the rules but certainly did not change the character of the 24th. Although Lieutenant Colonel Wilds, who succeeded the first commander, was not known as a temperance worker, he did expell a sutler for openly selling liquor to some of the regiment's backsliders. At least one private was court-martialled for repeatedly returning to camp intoxicated. Occasionally a whiskey ration was distributed on long marches or during tiring construction of fortifications. On holidays beer was sometimes sold to the enlisted men, but the problems with alcohol which plagued some Union commands were never prevalent in the 24th. It would not be proper, however, to claim that the 24th Iowa was any better or any worse, because of its temperance, than the other fighting regiments in the Civil War.

The temperance characteristic was probably retained more because of the Methodist background of most of the men in the 24th Iowa, than because of the rules and regulations imposed by the officers. Throughout their three years of service, Sunday church services and weekly prayer meetings were always well attended by the men. When a chaplain was not present or a local preacher would not speak, one of the captains would assume his old civilian role of preacher and deliver the sermon. Captain James Martin was probably most remembered for gathering the survivors of the terrible Battle of Champion's Hill for a customary prayer after the sad calling of the roll. These men were fundamentalists who took their religion seriously. Although the pious among them

were often shocked by certain indiscretions, the rogues of the temperance regiment were probably far from exceptional problems.

The 24th Iowa was one of only three Iowa regiments to serve in both the Western and Eastern Theaters. The 22nd, 28th, and 24th Iowa shared a similar fate of fighting in a number of departments under a variety of commanders. The 24th viewed General Grant as their most able commander, followed almost equally by General Sheridan and General Sherman. General McClelland, the regiment's first corps commander, was well liked, but the men did not seem to be overawed by this political general and adjusted readily to his replacement by General Ord. Western commanders were readily accepted, but eastern generals were viewed with disdain. The most detested commander that the regiment served under was General Banks, under whose command the 24th Iowa suffered its first defeat in battle. The XIII Corps was disbanded after the Red River Campaign, and the 24th was one of the few western regiments transferred to the XIX Corps, which was comprised mostly of eastern regiments.

The harshest criticism by the regiment was reserved for commanders who protected Confederate property while profiting from cotton confiscation and speculation. The Vicksburg Campaign made the 24th master foragers, and wherever they marched, Confederate property suffered. The marching ability of the Iowans rivaled any regiment with which it served, and the hawkeyes rarely complained as long as the pace of the march was not too rapid to allow occasional jayhawking.

The courage of the regiment stood the test of battle. Though superior forces occasionally broke the 24th's ranks, the scattered elements remained on the field, often fighting with other units or rallying once again around its own banner until the enemy fire took a

heavy toll in officers and men. The original colonel was broken physically, and his courage was criticized. Lieutenant Colonel Wilds proved an able replacement when Colonel Byam resigned. Wilds lost his life in the regiment's final battle at Cedar Creek. Major Wright, the regiment's last commander, was himself wounded three times in battle. Company officers paid a heavy price for their courage, as evidenced by Second Sergeant Charles Lucas' rise to the rank of captain due to the death or resignation for disability of his superiors. Seven captains and four first lieutenants were killed or died of wounds suffered in combat. The number of killed and wounded amounted to 10.6 per cent of the regiment's total enrollments. The total number of battle casualties equalled 476. In the total deaths due to wounds, disease, accidents, and imprisonment, the 24th ranked third highest among Iowa regiments.⁶

The comparison of the 24th with the two Iowa regiments usually in her division shows disease was the real killer (see Table 5).

Table 5
Summary of Casualties

	<u>24th</u>	<u>28th</u>	<u>22nd</u>
Total Enrollment	1,204	1,195	1,084
Killed	71	60	60
Wounded	260	262	276
Died of Wounds	55	29	55
Died of Disease	201	189	128
Discharged	235	206	187
Captured	76	99	79
Transferred	55	44	42

Source: Roster and Record, Vol. III, pp. 559, 794, 1274.

⁶Fox, Regimental Losses in the Civil War, p. 412.

As disease and battle took their toll, the attitudes of the Iowans hardened against the South. Political feeling which had run the gamut from Peace Democrat to Radical Republican, became more radical and less moderate. The Union party candidates in each election reflected the sentiments of those still in Iowa. The men's nineteenth century attitude toward Negroes remained, however, one of freedom but not equality.

Like most northern soldiers, the Iowans had had little contact with Negroes prior to their arrival in the South. The first encounters produced marvel and awe at these "foreign" creatures. The regiment delighted in freeing the Negroes from the bonds of slavery, but at the same time they saw nothing wrong with relegating many to the servant class for little more than room and board. Supporting the sentiment in Governor Kirkwood's desire to have "some dead niggers as well as dead white men," the 24th enthusiastically approved the use of black troops, and a few even applied to command these new Negro regiments.⁷ They generally discounted the ability of black regiments and were thoroughly amazed at the quality of the South Carolina Colored Regiment that relieved the 24th at Augusta, Georgia. After being shocked by such aspects of slavery as the auction block and masters' cruelties, many felt that black reconstruction was perfect justice. The Iowans also returned home with bitter memories of their treatment by southern whites in Louisiana and Georgia.

With little fanfare these citizen soldiers returned to Iowa and returned to their civilian occupations. Officially, only recorded troop

⁷Hesseltine, Lincoln and the War Governors, p. 203.

movements, battle reports, and company rosters noted the history of one of Iowa's most interesting regiments. The story of the 24th was preserved most appropriately in the diaries and letters of the common soldiers who served their country, not for adventure or glory, but out of a deep sense of duty to their country.

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